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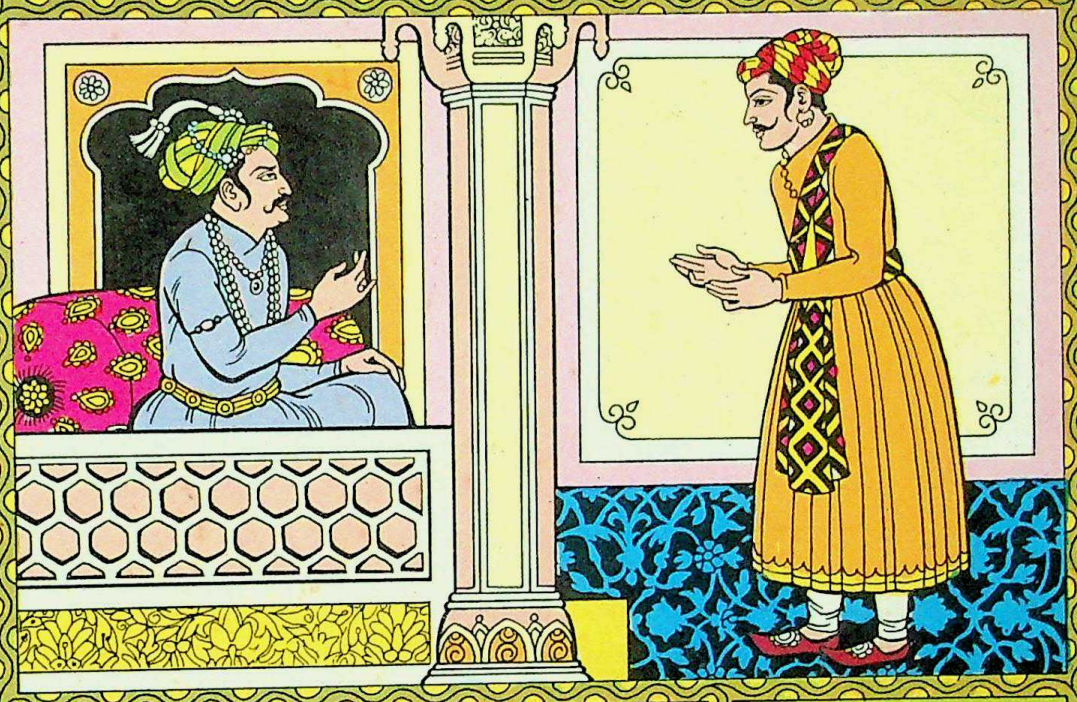
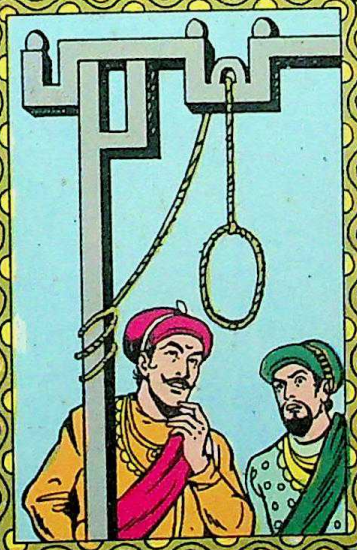
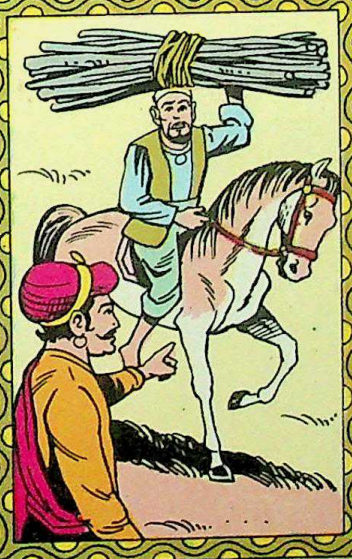
AMAR CHITRA KATHA

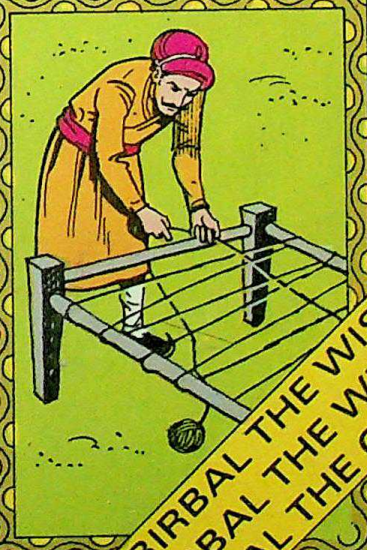
BUMPER ISSUE NO. 2 RS 20

TALES OF BIRBAL









- BIRBAL THE WISE
- BIRBAL THE WITTY
- BIRBAL THE CLEVER

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BIRBAL

Who hasn't heard of Raja Birbal—the wise and witty minister in the court of Akbar, the Great Mughal ?

Though popularly known as Birbal, his real name was Maheshdas. It is believed that he belonged to a poor Brahmana family of Trivikrampur (now known as Tikawanpur) on the bank of the River Yamuna but it was only by virtue of his sharp intellect that he rose to be a minister at the court of Akbar.

He was a good administrator, a good soldier and perhaps what pleased Akbar the most—a good jester. Less known is the fact that he was also a good poet. He wrote under the pen-name, "Brahma" and a collection of his poems is preserved in the Bharatpur Museum.

Akbar, in the following stories is more legendary than historical. Raja Birbal, the hero of these stories, is hardly heard of in history. Yet, the stories of Akbar and Birbal have continued to be a vital part of the folklore of India.

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BIRBAL THE WISE

THE WICKED BARBER

BIRBAL WAS A MINISTER AT THE COURT OF EMPEROR AKBAR. BOTH, HINDUS AND MUSLIMS AT THE COURT, LIKED HIM FOR HIS READY WIT AND KEEN SENSE OF HUMOUR. HOWEVER, THERE WERE A FEW WHO ENVIED HIM.

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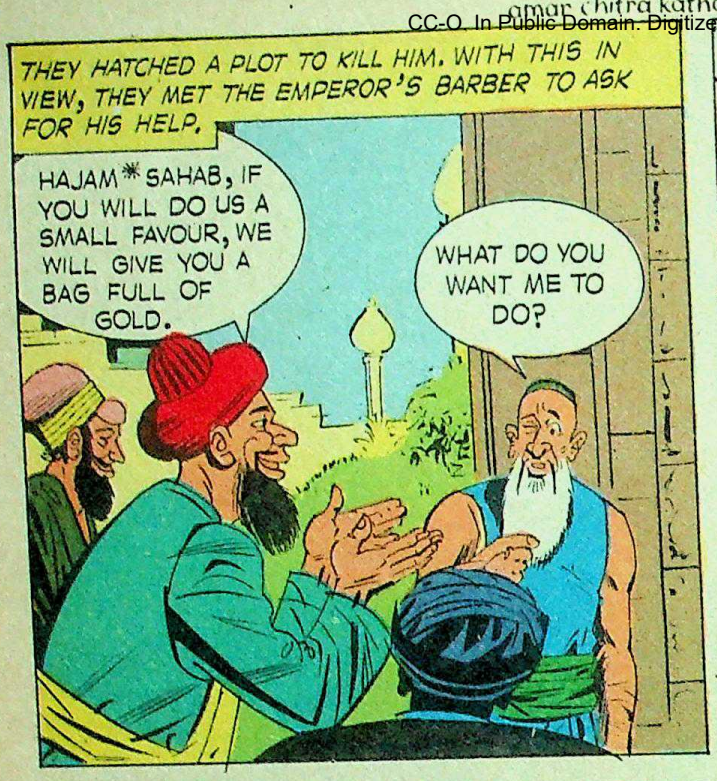

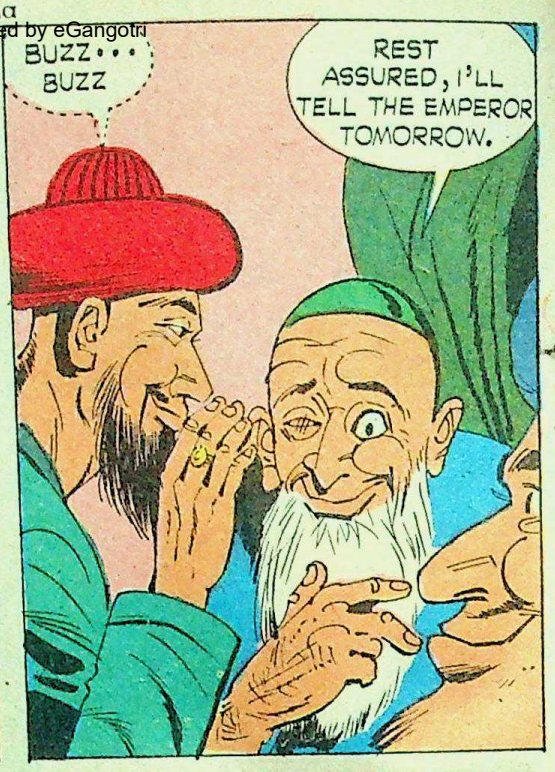

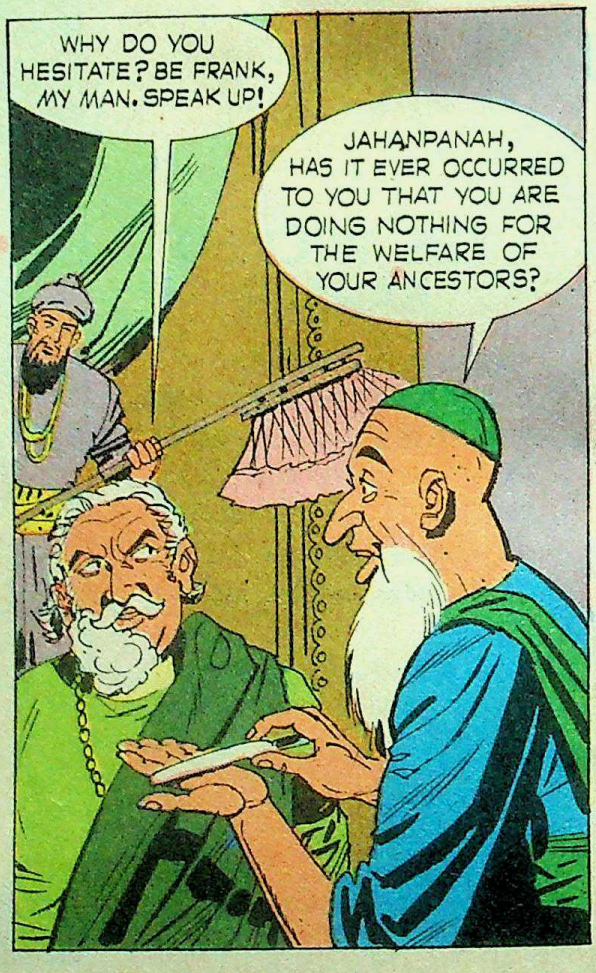

*BARBER ⊕REFUGE OF THE WORLD.

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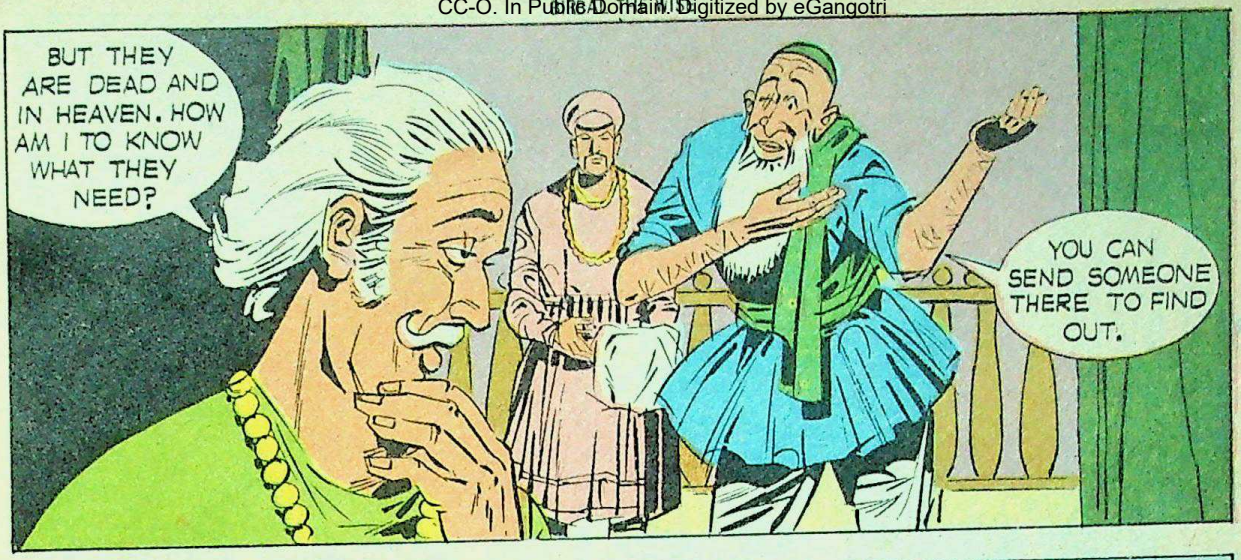

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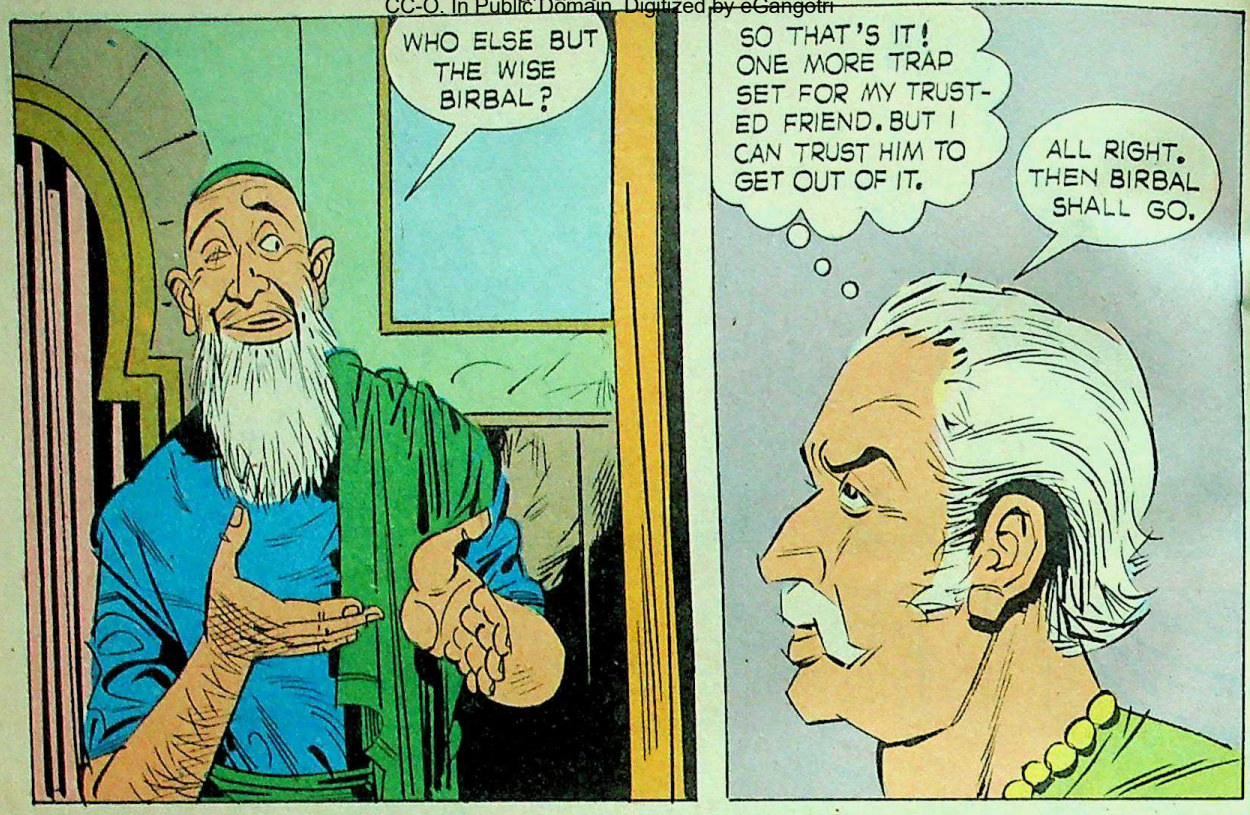

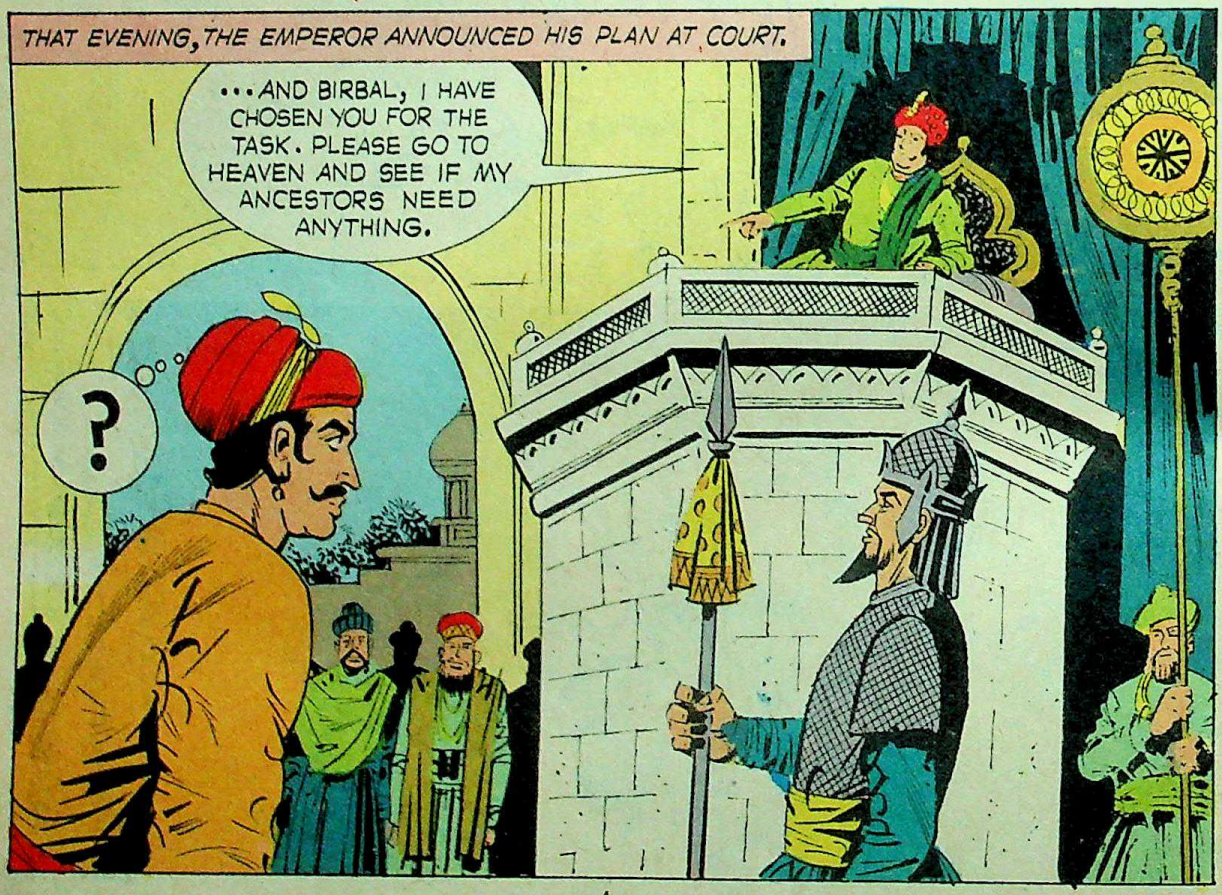

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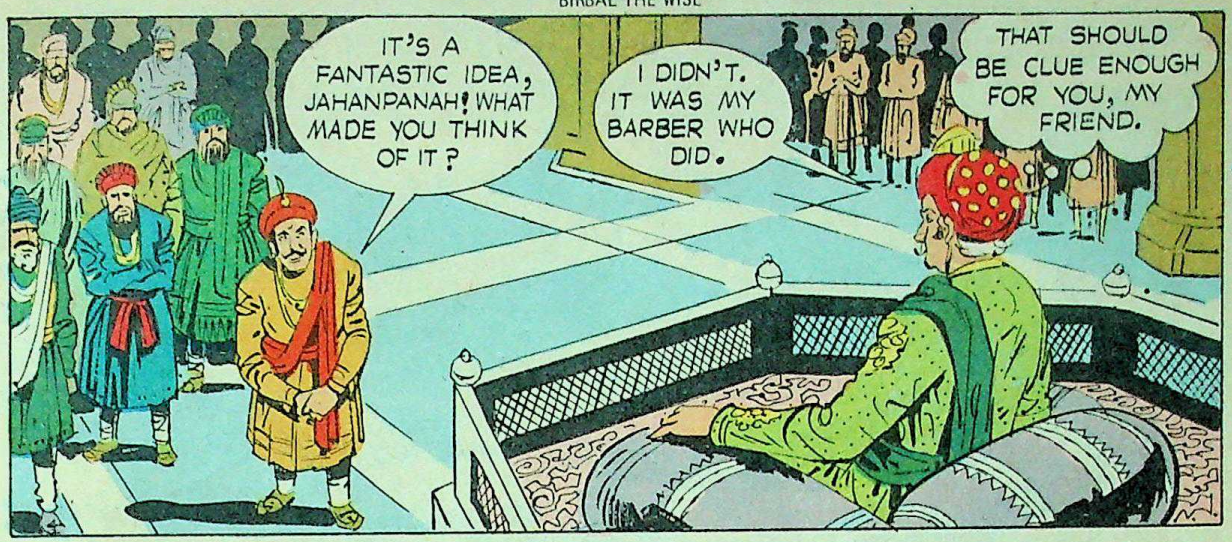

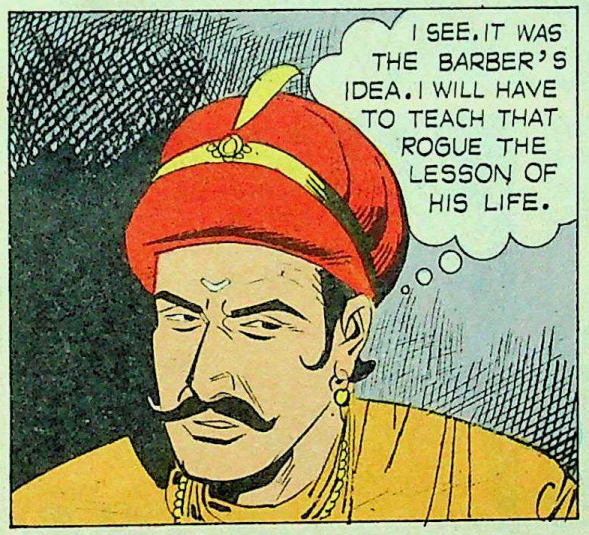

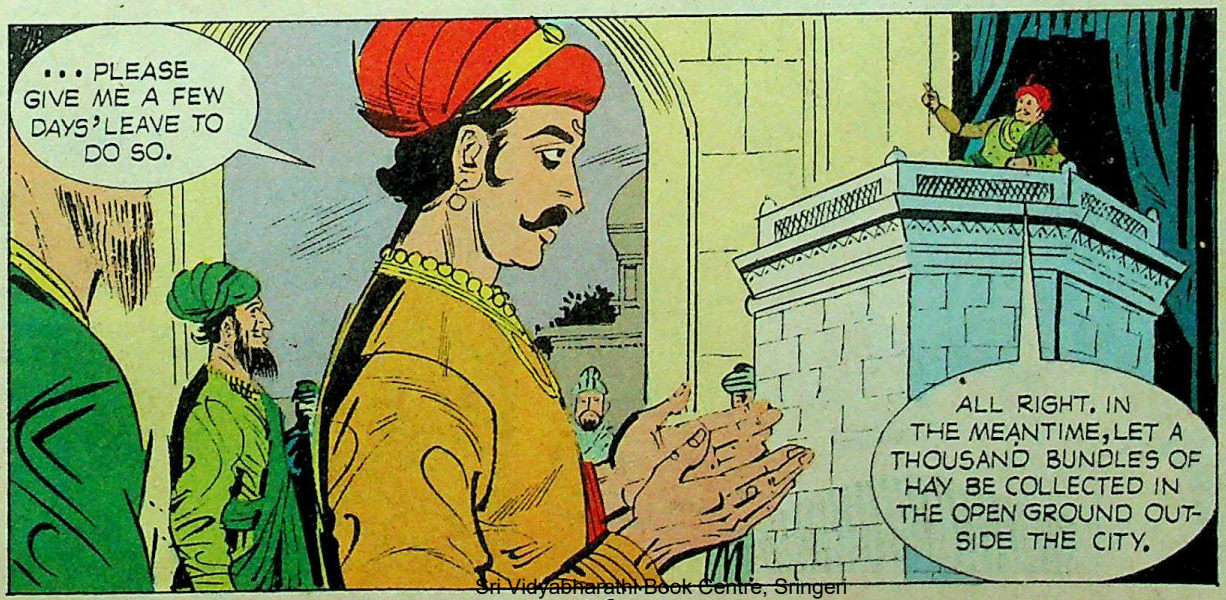

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BIRBAL IMMEDIATELY GOT A FEW TRUSTED WORKMEN TO DIG A TUNNEL FROM HIS HOUSE TO THE OPEN GROUND WHERE THE BUNDLES OF HAY WERE BEING PILED UP.

ON THE APPOINTED DAY, EVERYONE GATHERED TO SEE BIRBAL ASCEND TO HEAVEN.

I WOULD LIKE TO LIE DOWN HERE. PLEASE START PILING THE HAY AROUND ME.

BIRBAL HAD CHOSEN A SPOT NEAR THE ENTRANCE TO HIS TUNNEL WHICH HAD BEEN CLEVERLY CONCEALED BY A FEW BUNDLES OF HAY.

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WHEN THE BUNDLES OF HAY BEGAN TO BURN, BIRBAL'S FRIENDS SHED TEARS...

POOR MAN! HOW CAN HE COME BACK ALIVE? HE WAS A GOOD AND NOBLE SOUL — A REAL FRIEND INDEED!

...BUT HIS ENEMIES REJOICED.

WE HAVE AT LAST GOT RID OF HIM. WE MUST CELEBRATE THE OCCASION.

MEANWHILE —

ONCE I REACH HOME, I WILL REMAIN THERE FOR A FEW MONTHS TILL I THINK OF A PLAN TO PUNISH THE BARBER.

SIX MONTHS LATER, WHEN BIRBAL ENTERED THE COURT, NO ONE RECOGNISED HIM.

WHO COULD THAT MAN BE? WHAT DOES HE WANT HERE?

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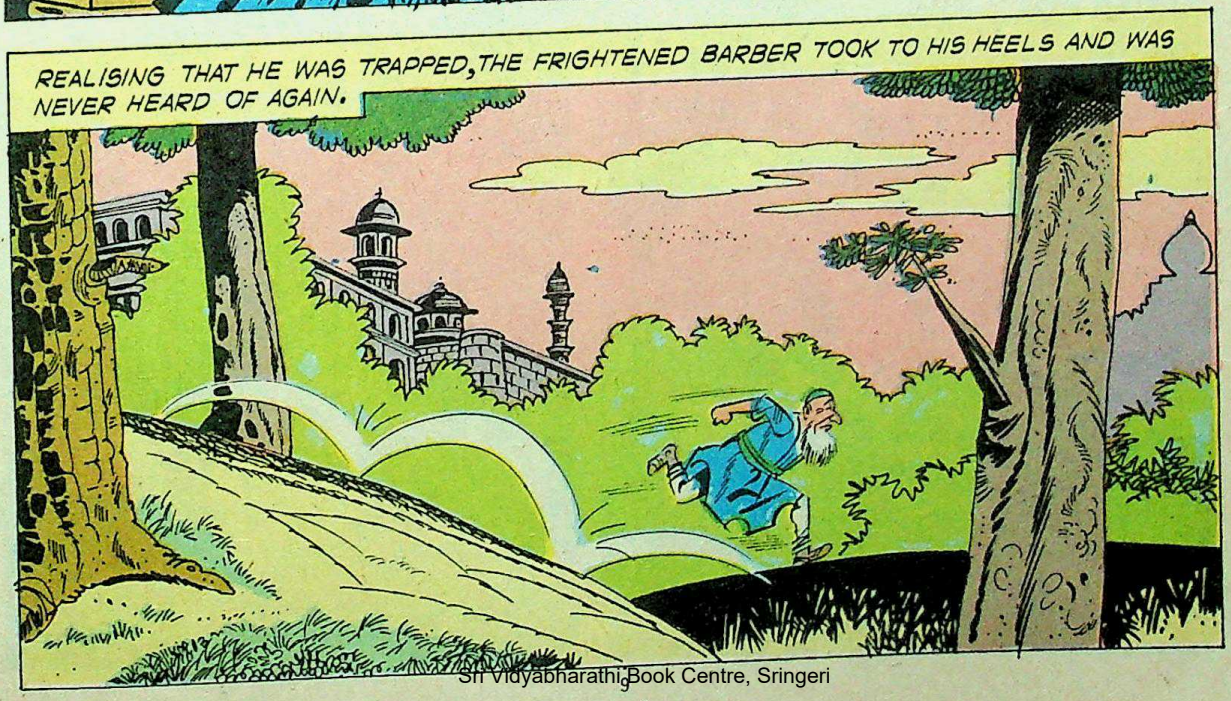

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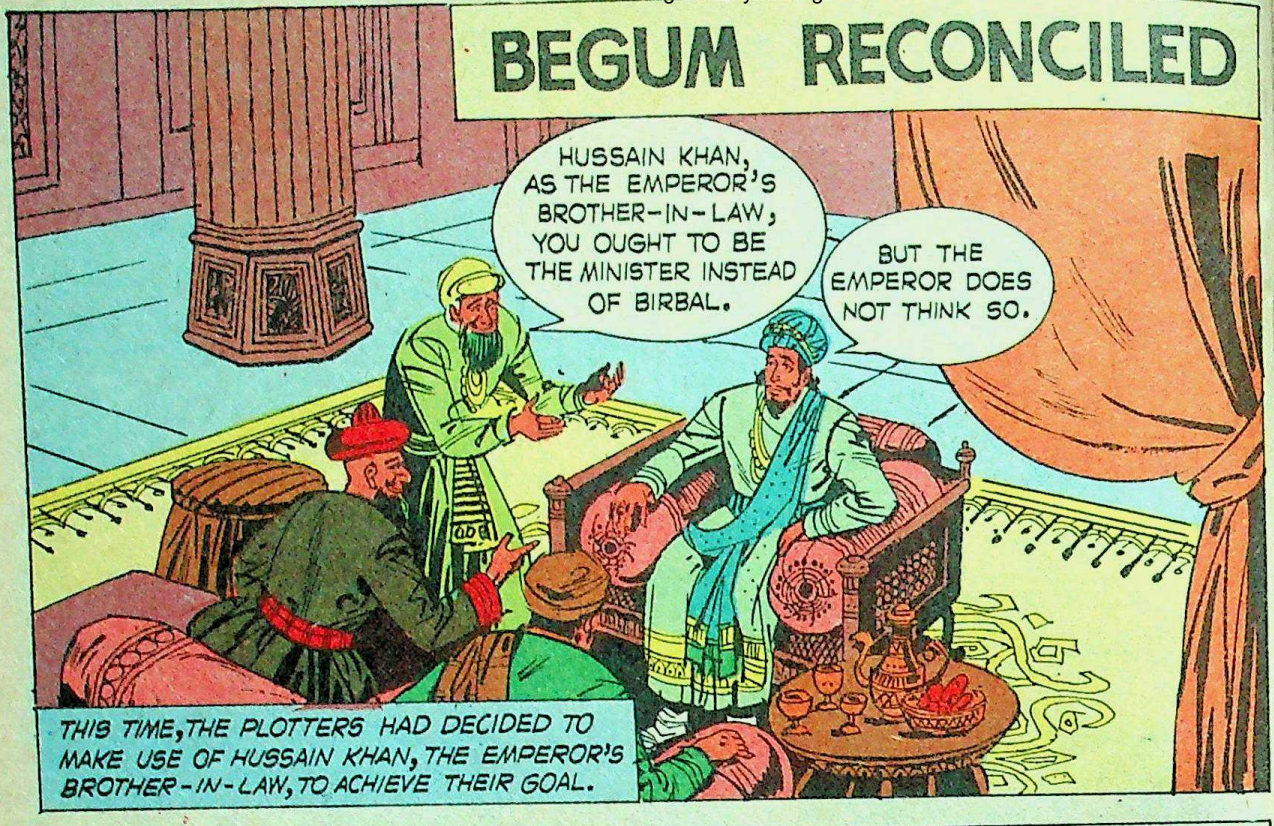
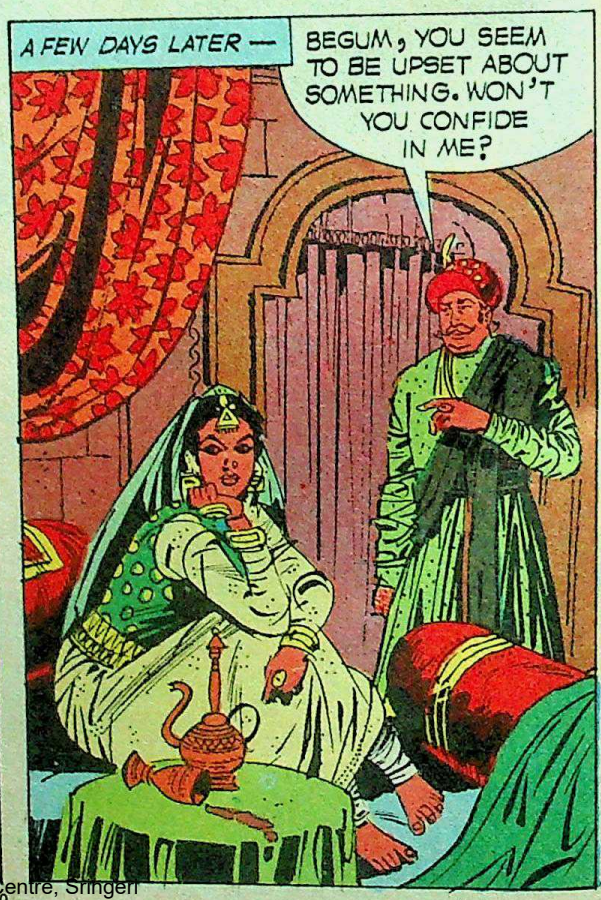
BEGUM RECONCILED





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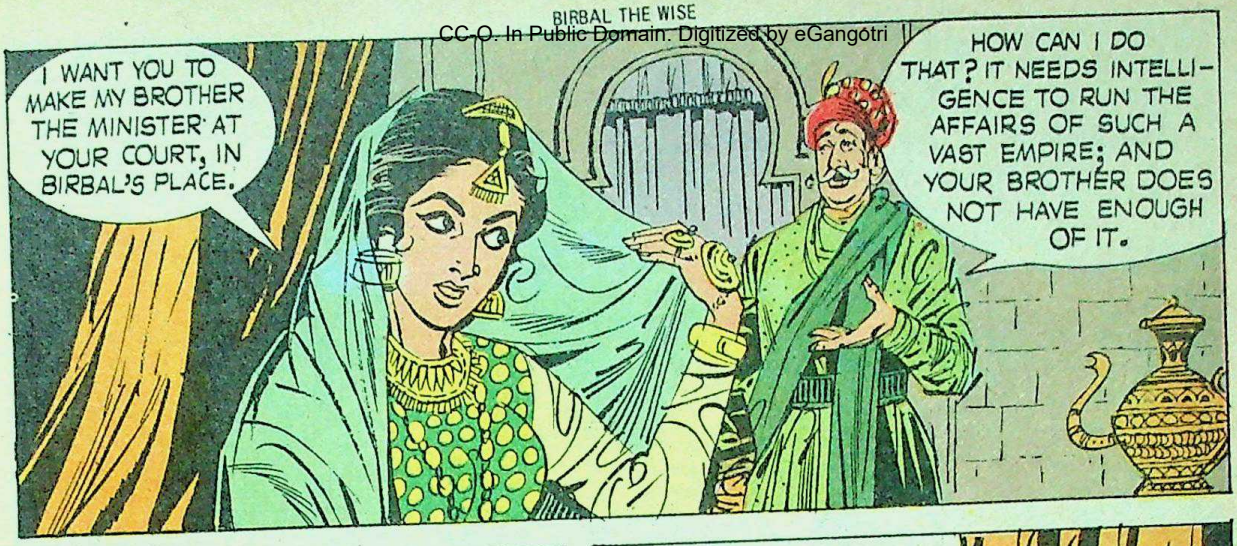

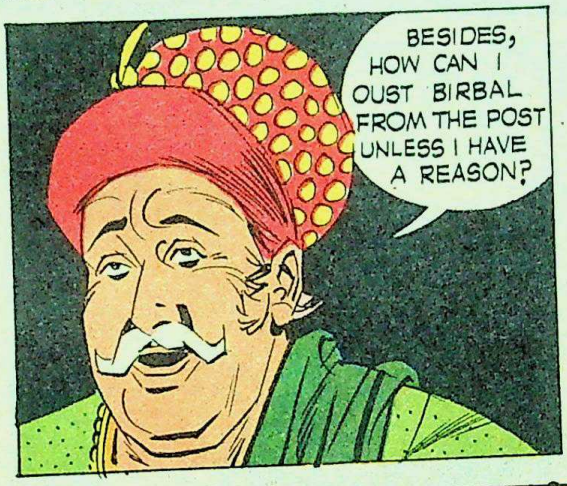

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Amar Chitra Katha

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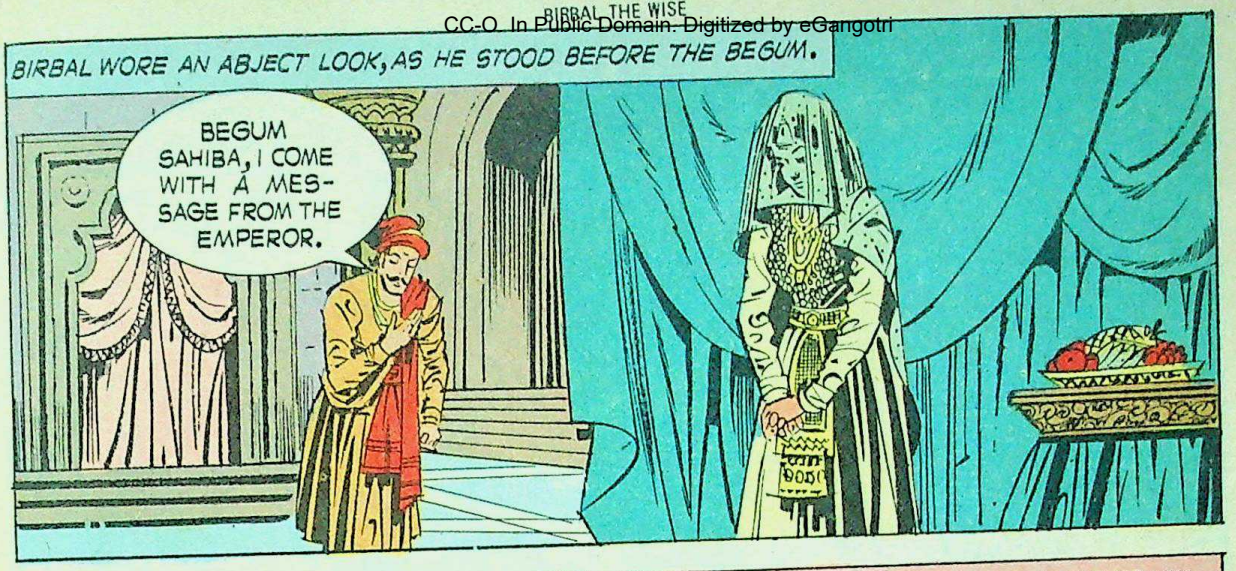

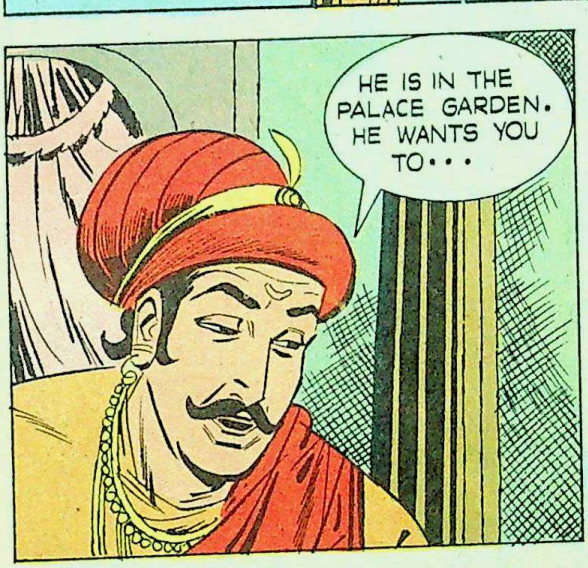

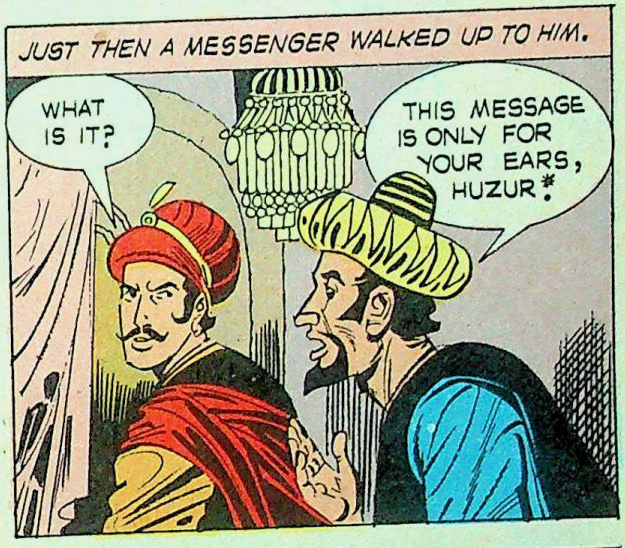

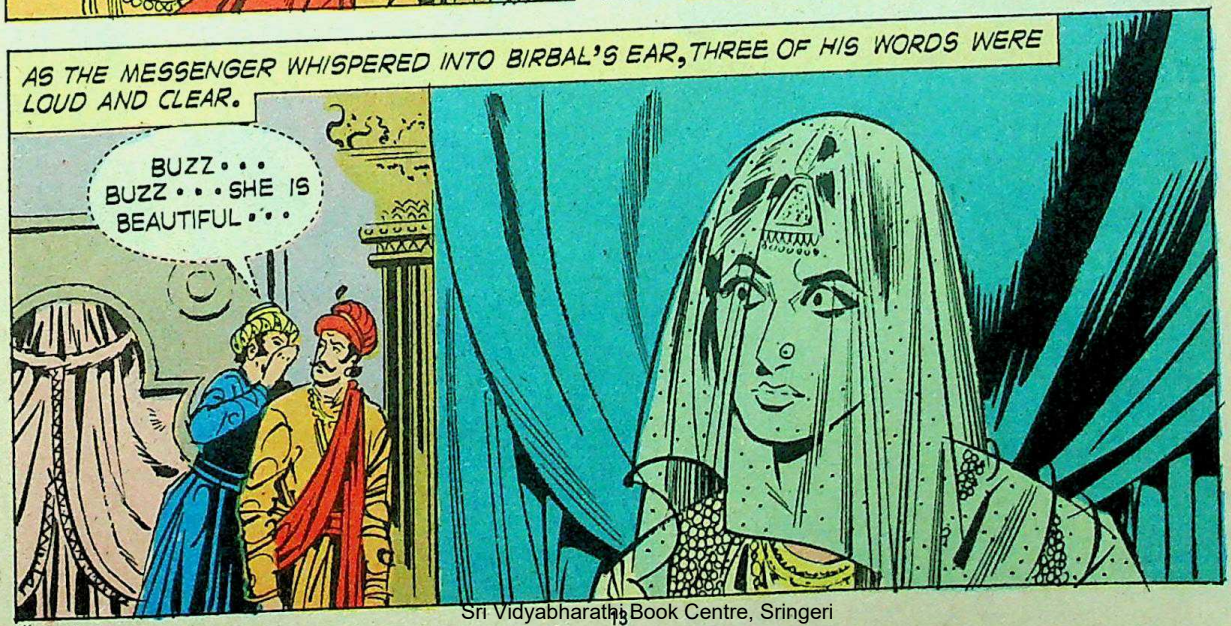

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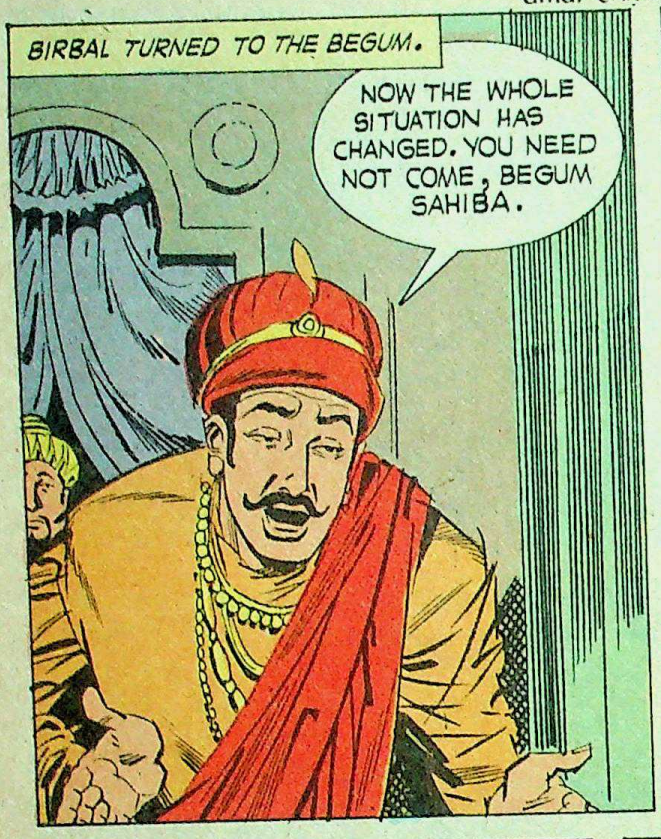

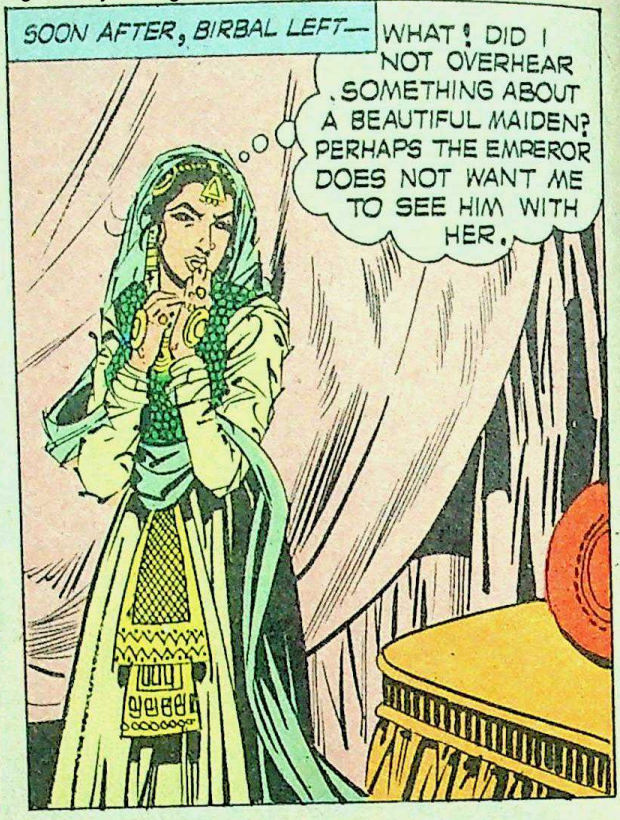

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THE DEAREST OBJECT

ONE DAY, FOR SOME REASON, AKBAR BECAME DISPLEASED WITH HIS BEGUM.

I ORDER YOU TO LEAVE THE PALACE WITHIN A DAY.

JAHANPANAH, HOW CAN I LIVE WITHOUT YOU? PLEASE DON'T SEND ME AWAY.

I HAVE MADE UP MY MIND. YOU WILL HAVE TO GO. HOWEVER, YOU MAY TAKE WITH YOU THE OBJECTS THAT ARE DEAR TO YOU.

AS THE DEJECTED BEGUM WONDERED WHAT TO DO, A THOUGHT SUDDENLY OCCURRED TO HER.

PERHAPS, BIRBAL CAN HELP ME.

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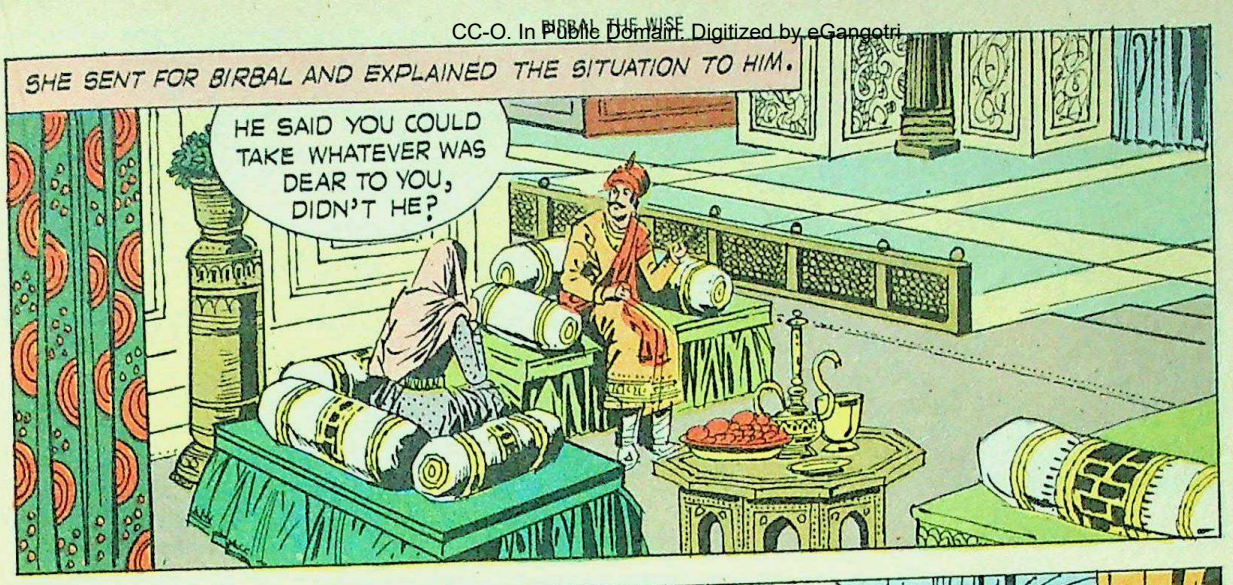

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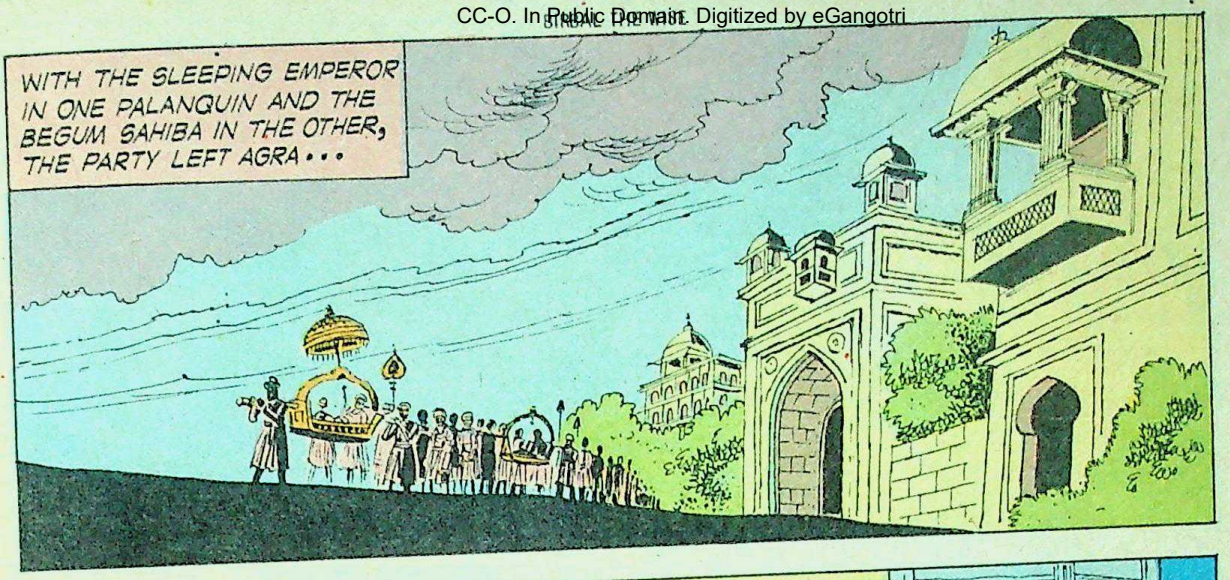

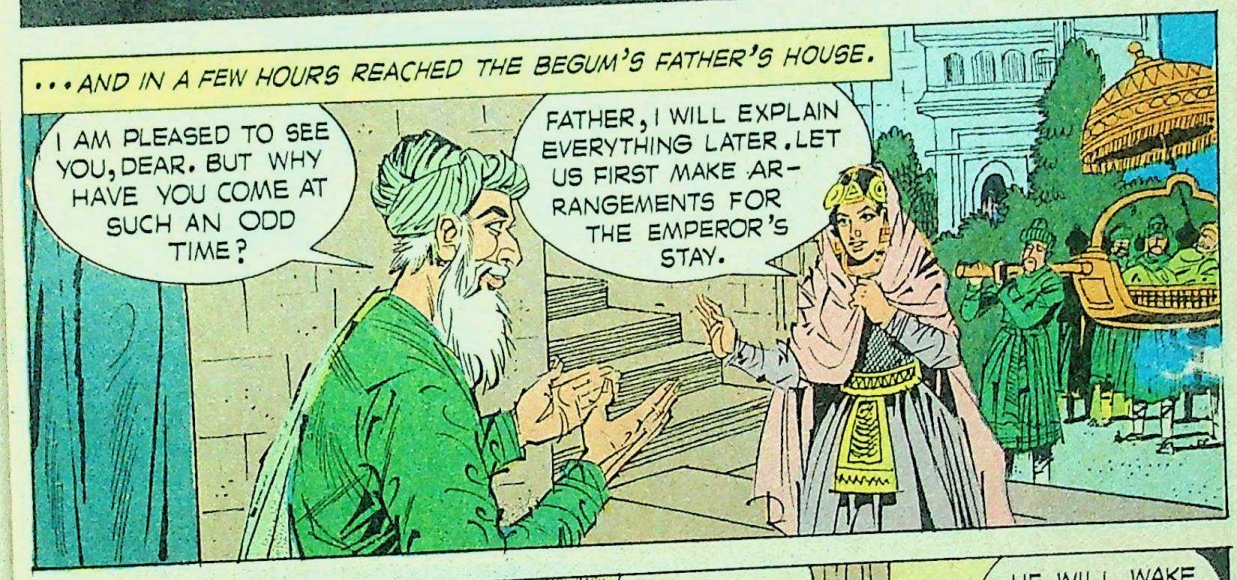

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BIRBAL'S VISIT TO BURMA

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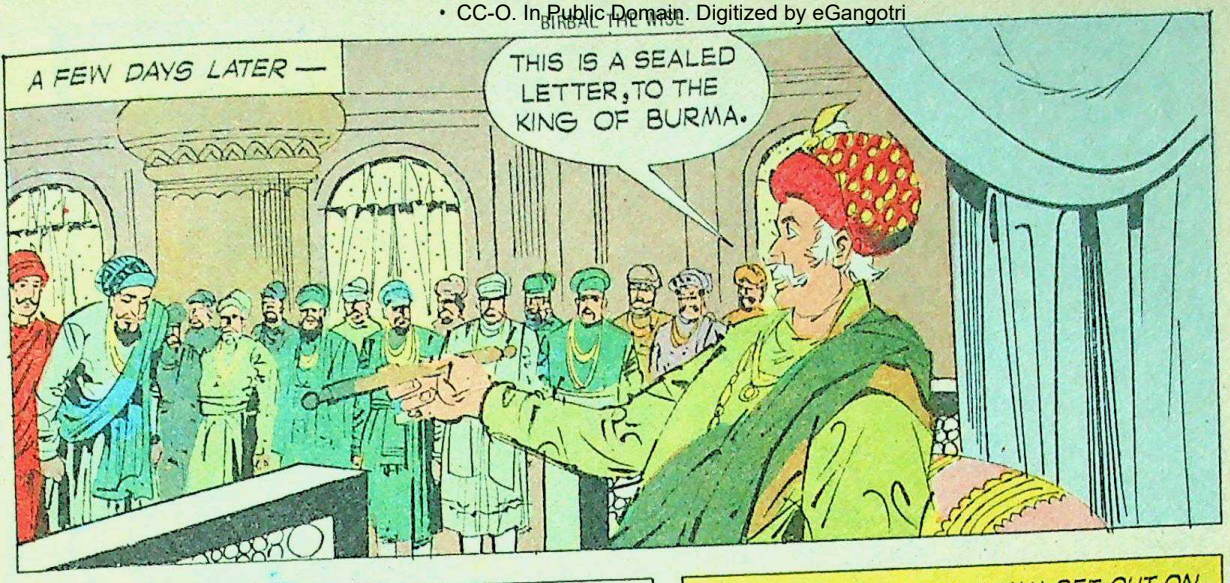

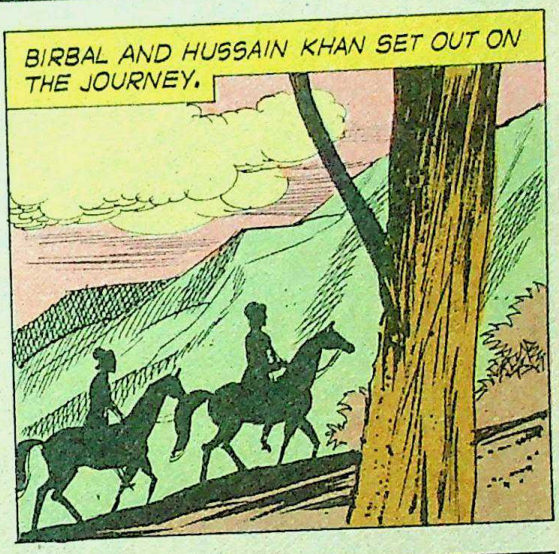

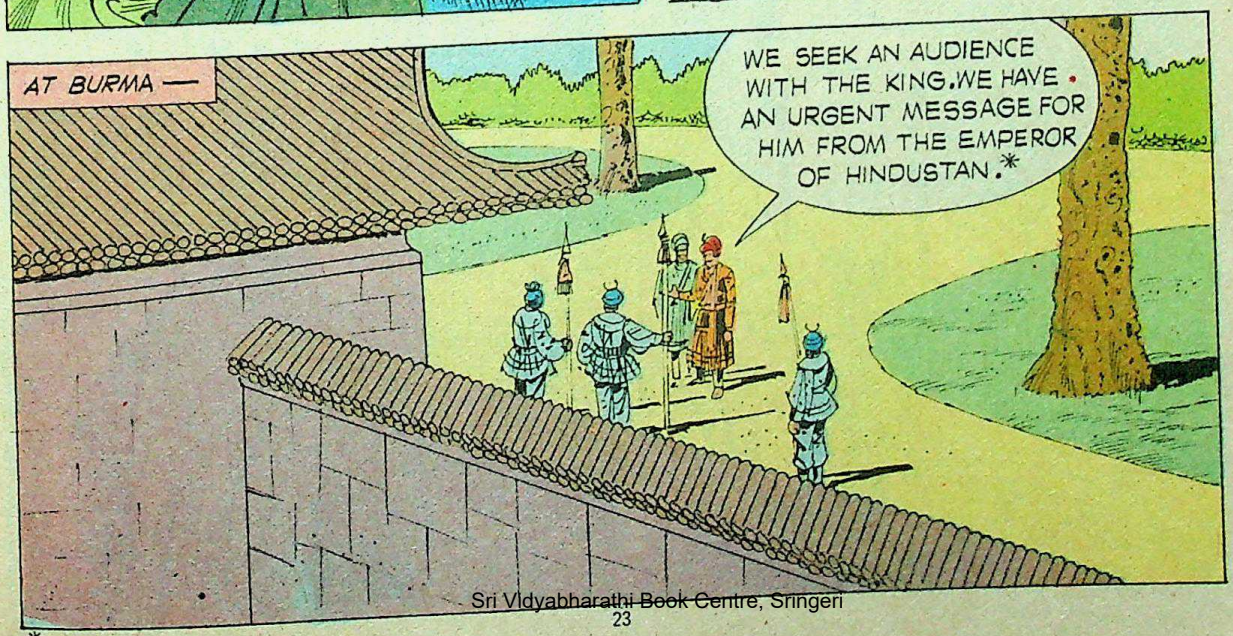

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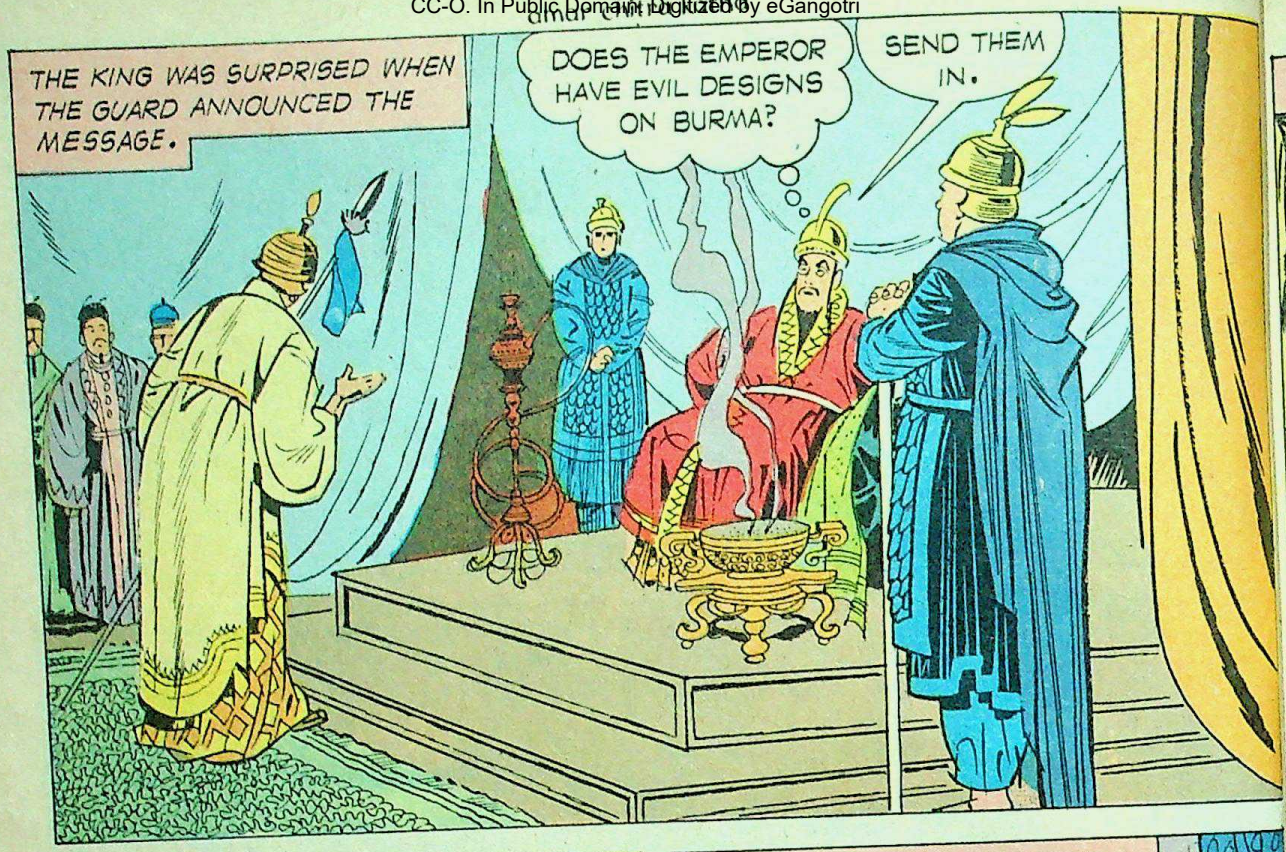

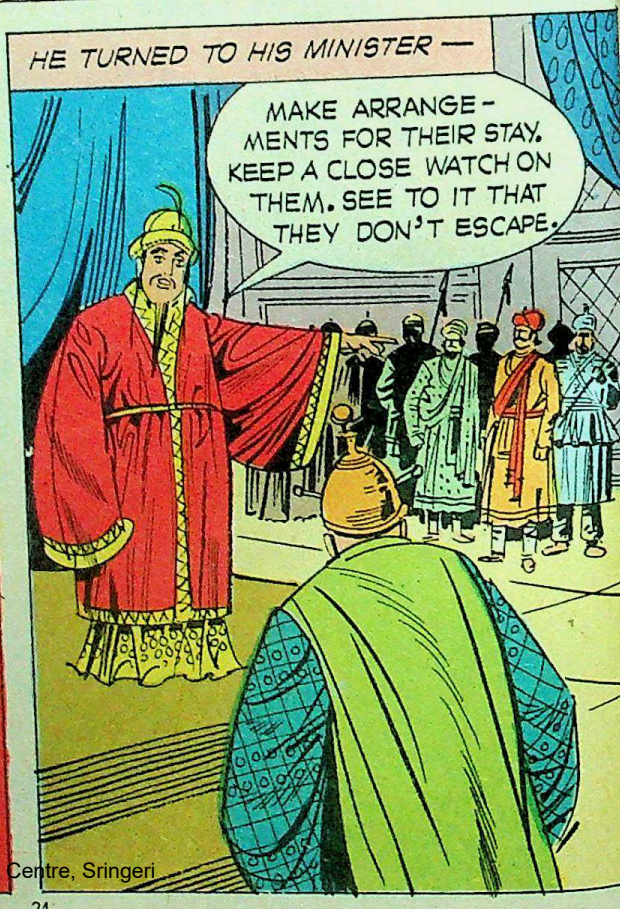

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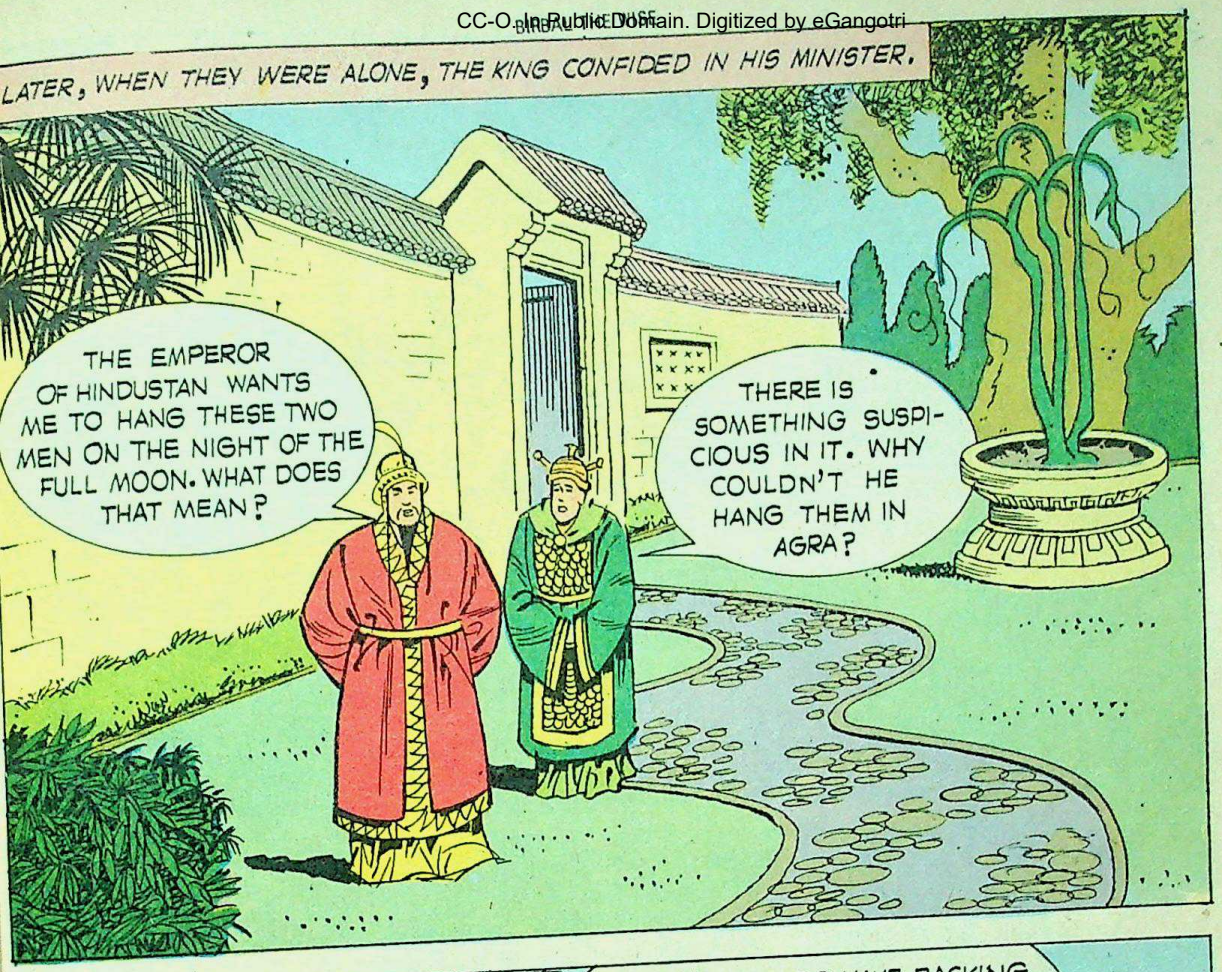

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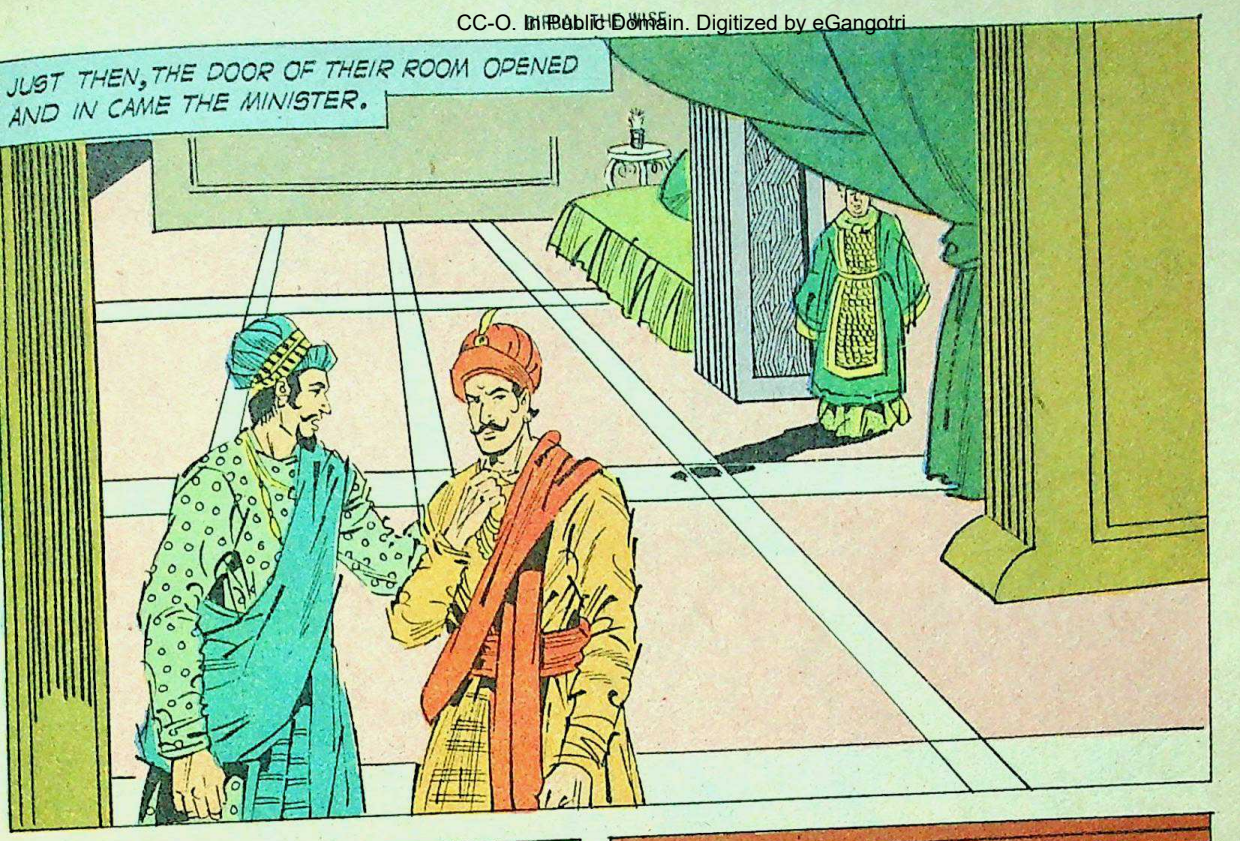

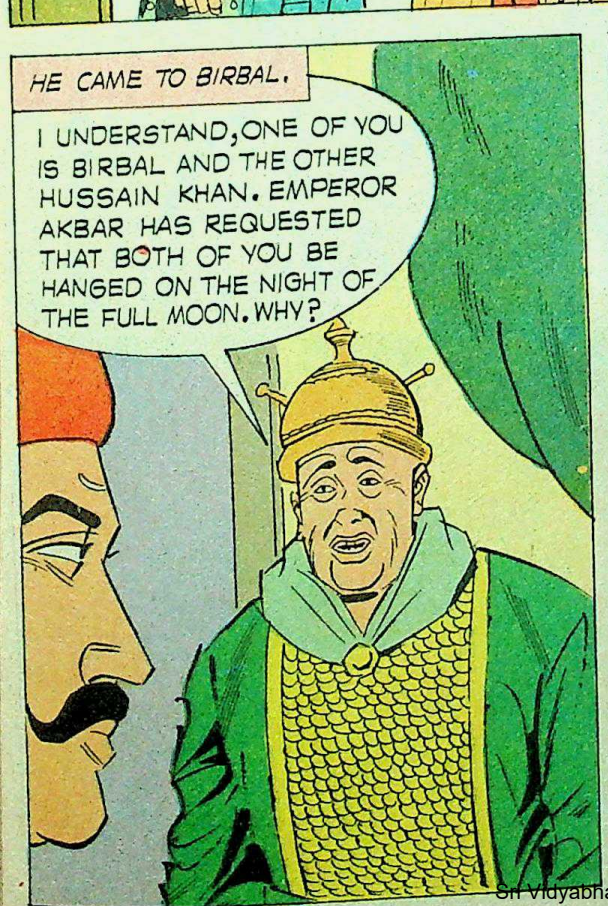

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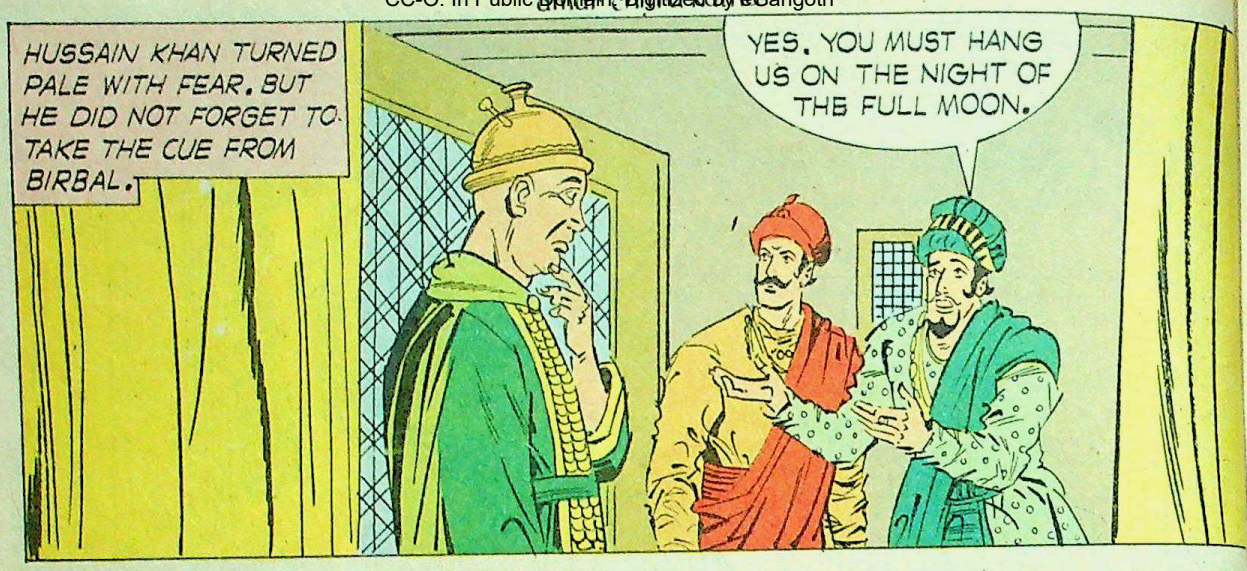

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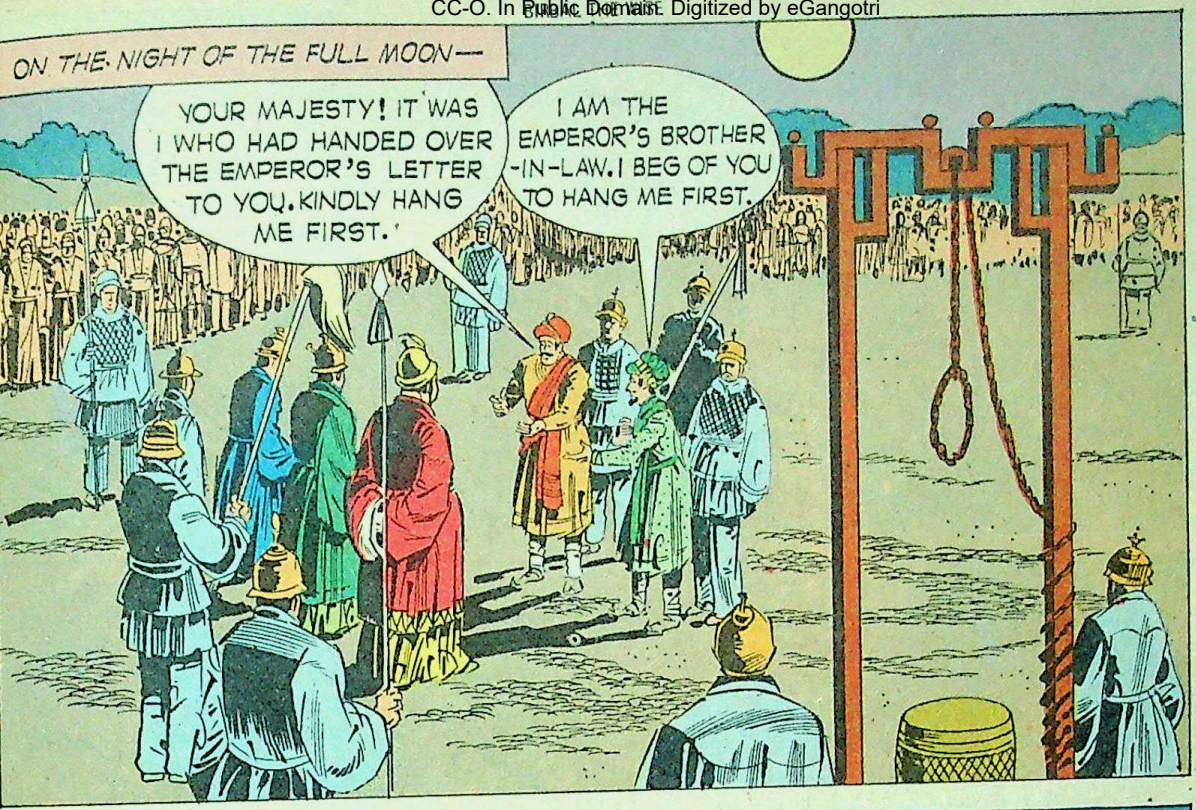

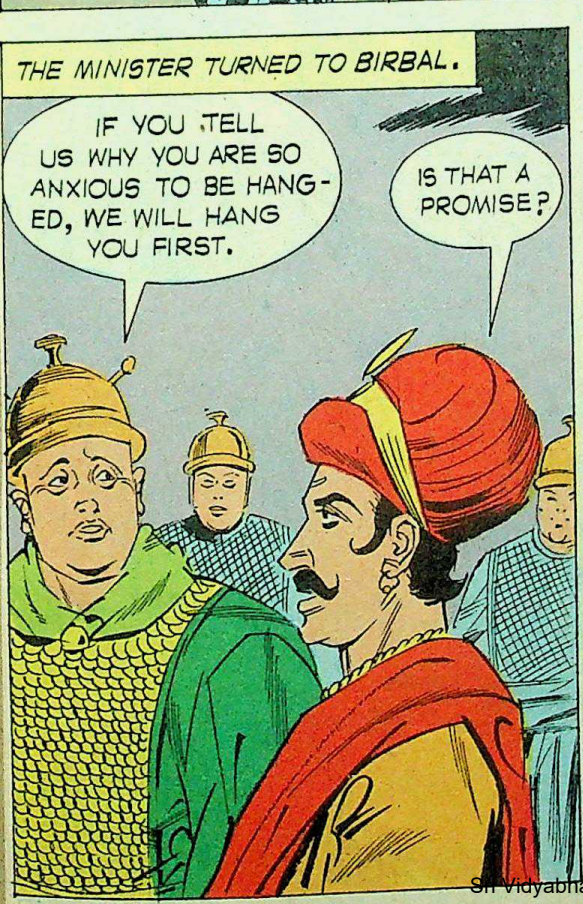

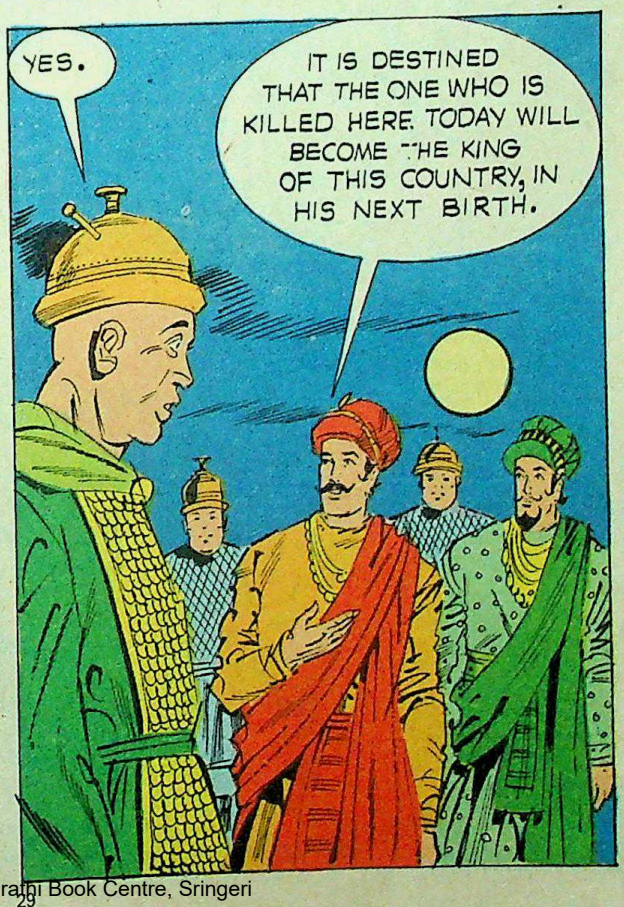

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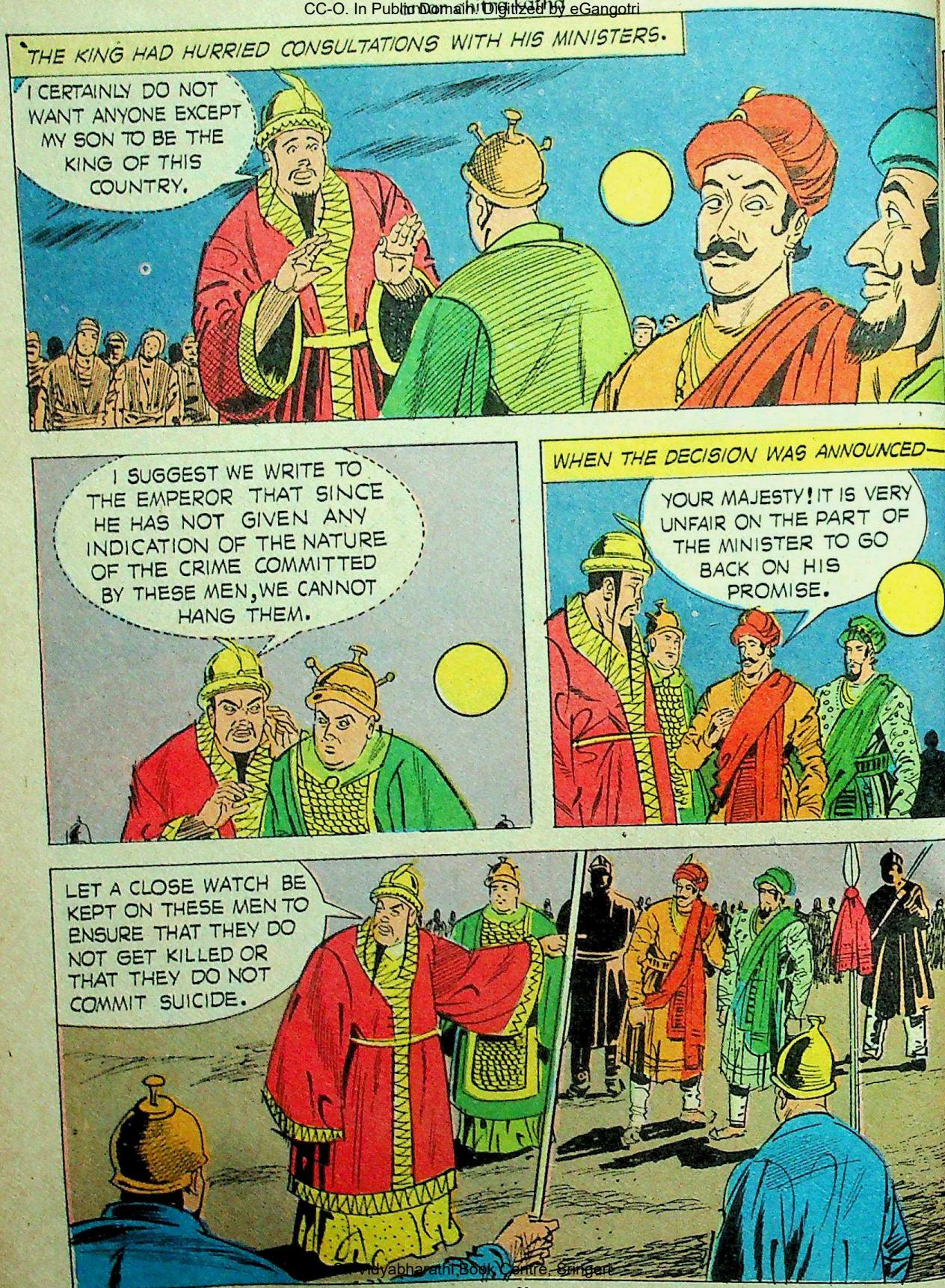

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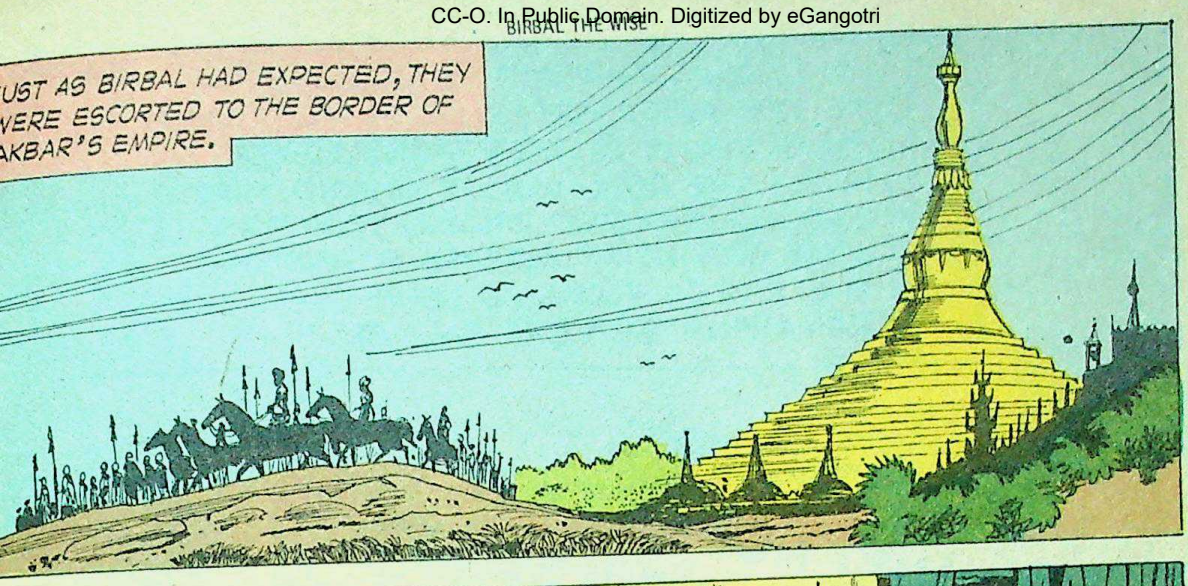

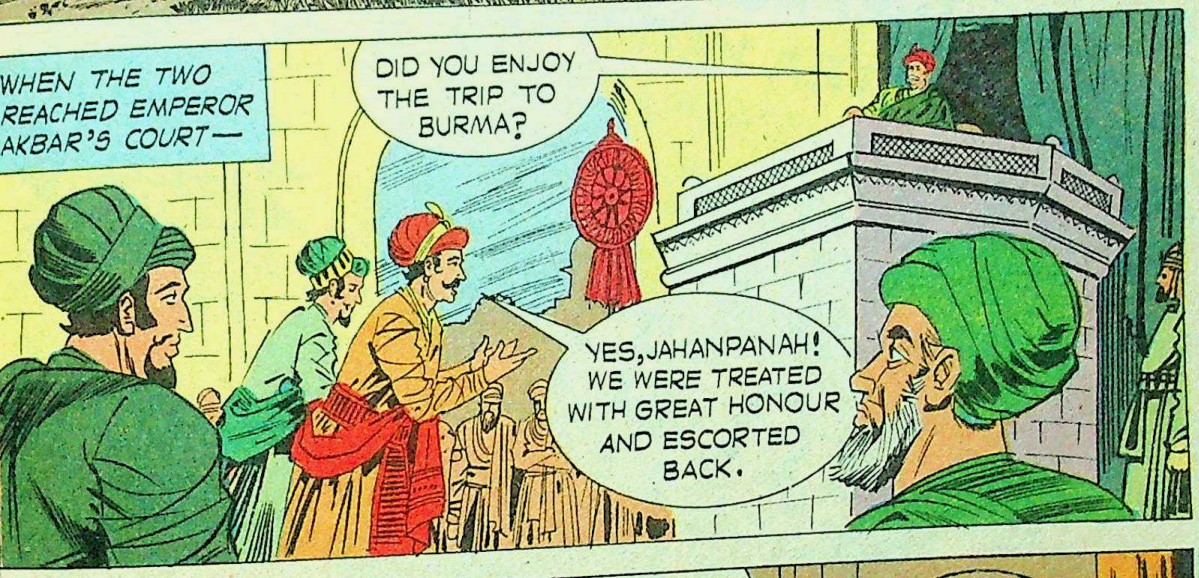

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VALMIKI'S RAMAYANA IS BELIEVED TO BE THE FIRST POETIC WORK WRITTEN IN SANSKRIT; IT IS, THEREFORE, REFERRED TO AS THE ADIKAVYA. IT IS SAID THAT BRAHMA ASSURED VALMIKI THAT "AS LONG AS THE MOUNTAINS STAND AND THE RIVERS FLOW, SO LONG SHALL THE RAMAYANA BE READ BY MEN."

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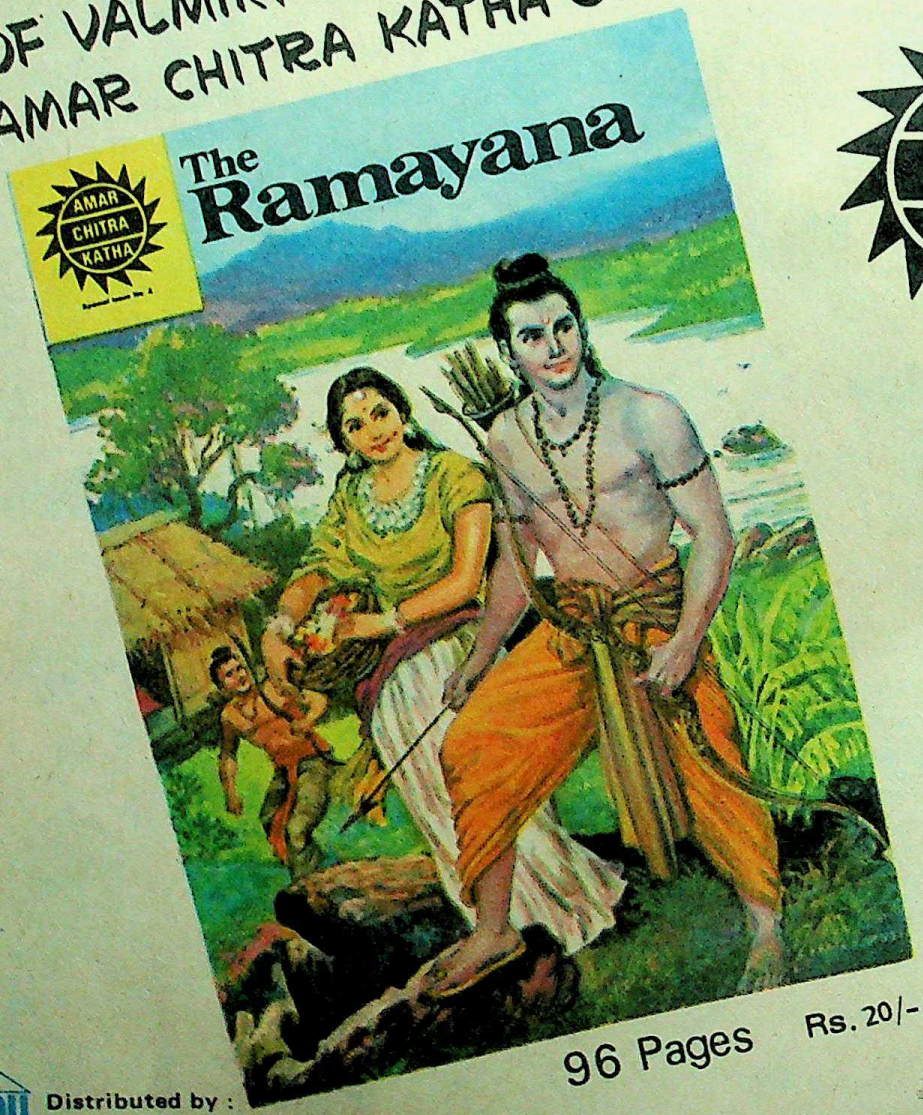

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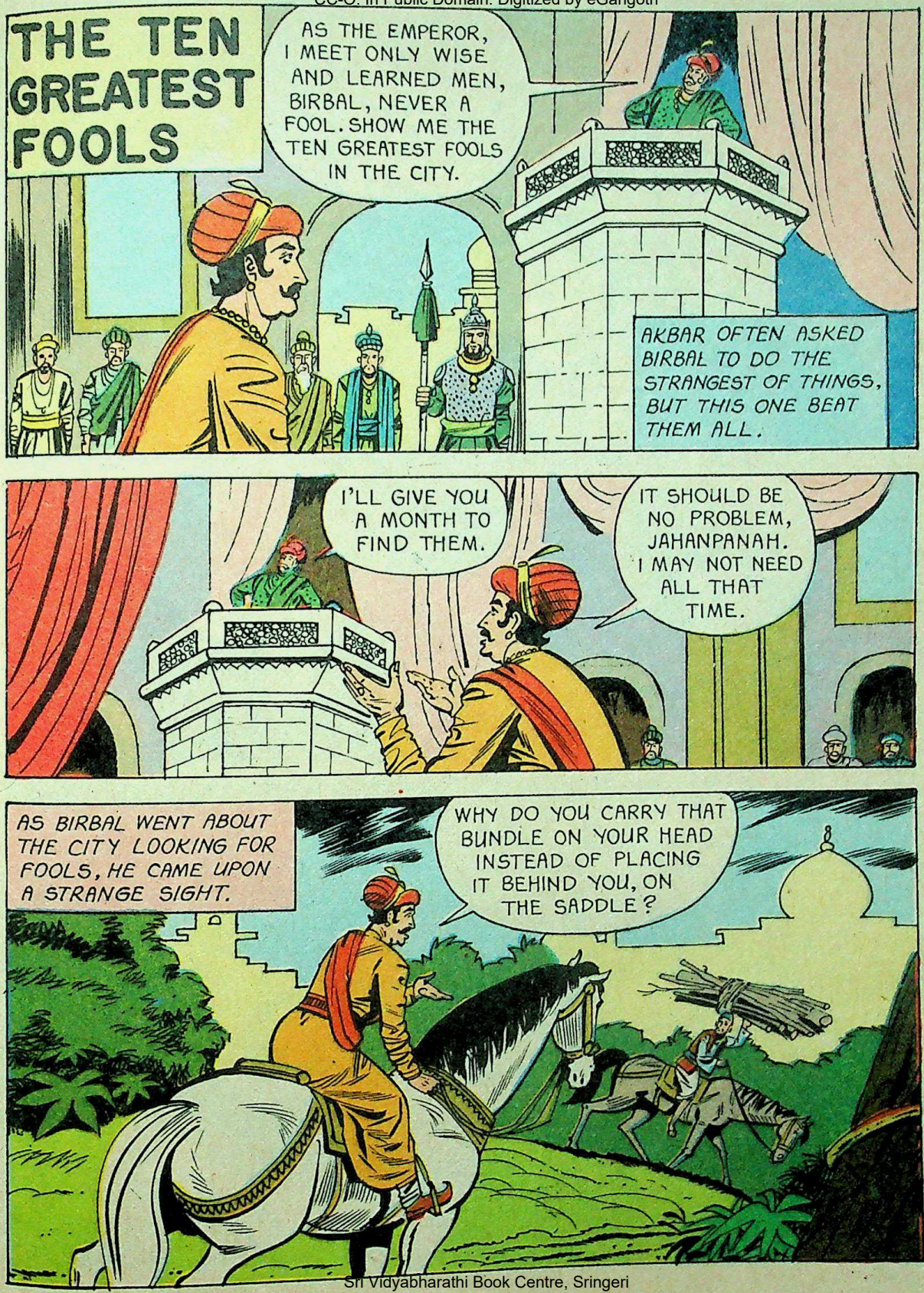

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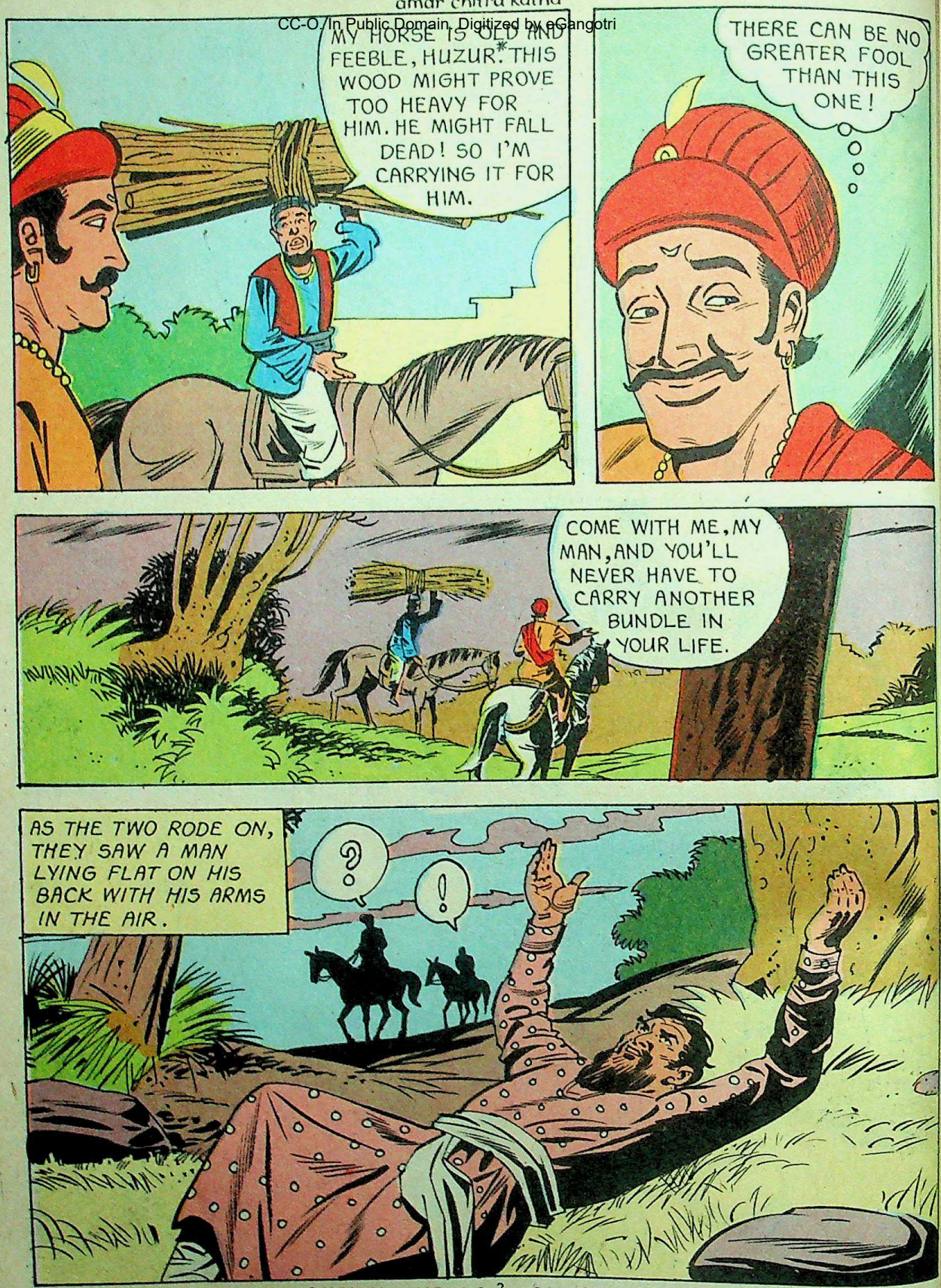

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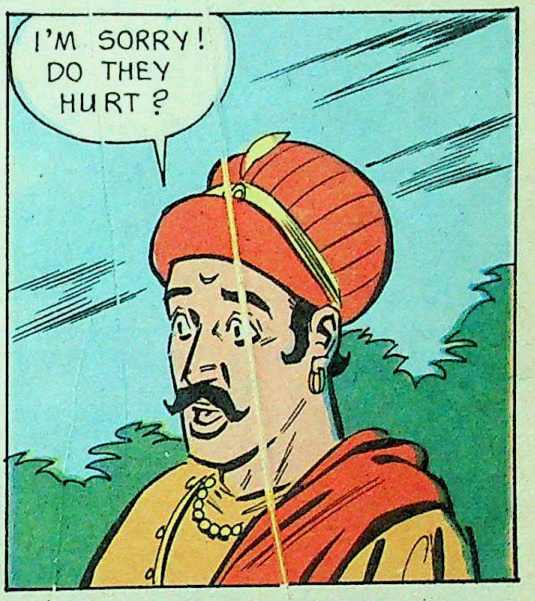

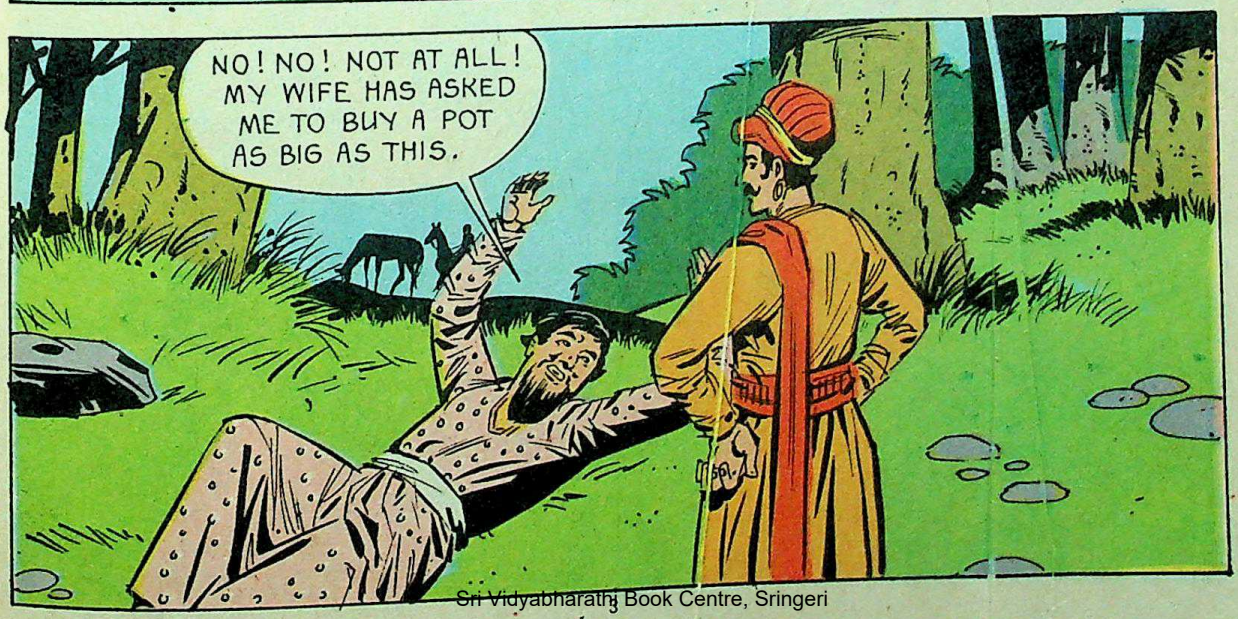

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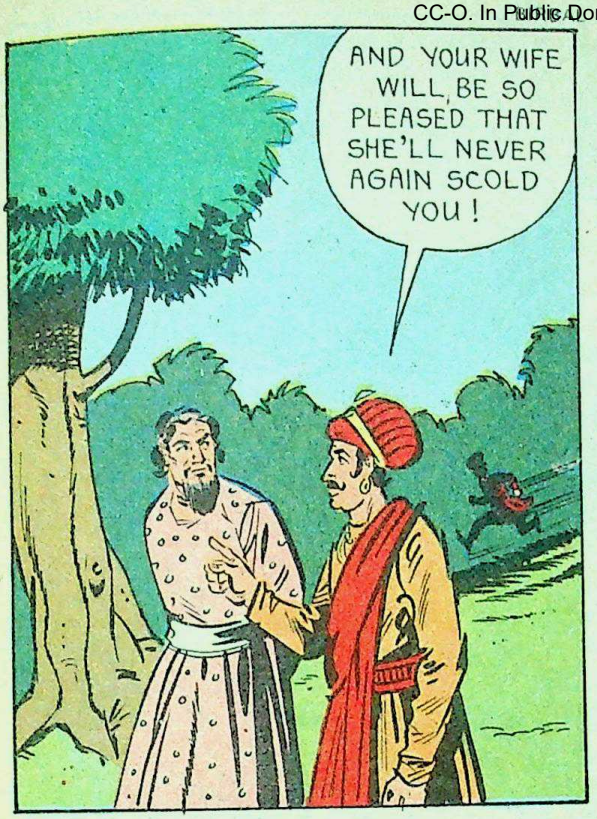

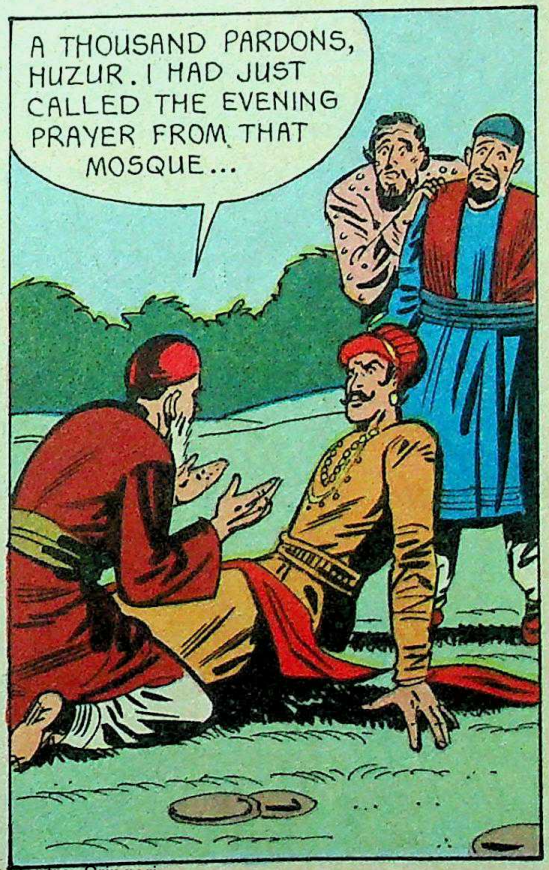

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...AND WANTED TO SEE HOW FAR MY VOICE WOULD CARRY. I WAS RUNNING AFTER IT. BUT NOW YOU'VE SPOILT IT ALL.

FOR A MOMENT BIRBAL STARED AT THE MAULVI,* SPEECHLESS WITH WONDER.

EVEN I NEVER DREAMT THAT OUR CITY POSSESSED SUCH A FOOL!

FORGET ABOUT THE VOICE. YOU CAN TRY AND FOLLOW IT SOME OTHER TIME. COME WITH ME AND I'LL GIVE YOU TWO GOLD MOHURS.+

*MUSLIM PRIEST +COINS

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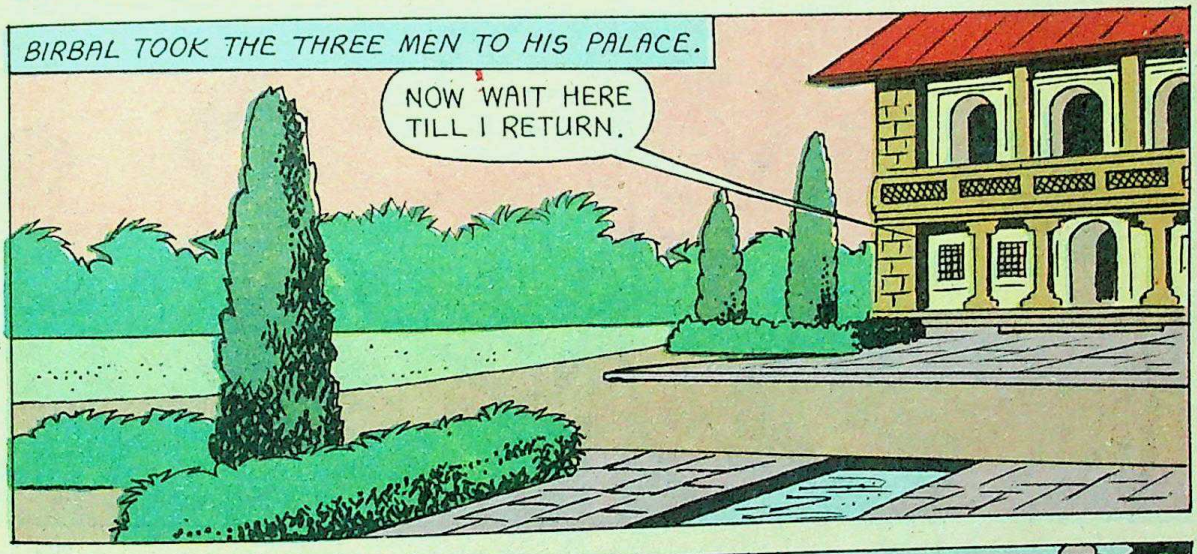

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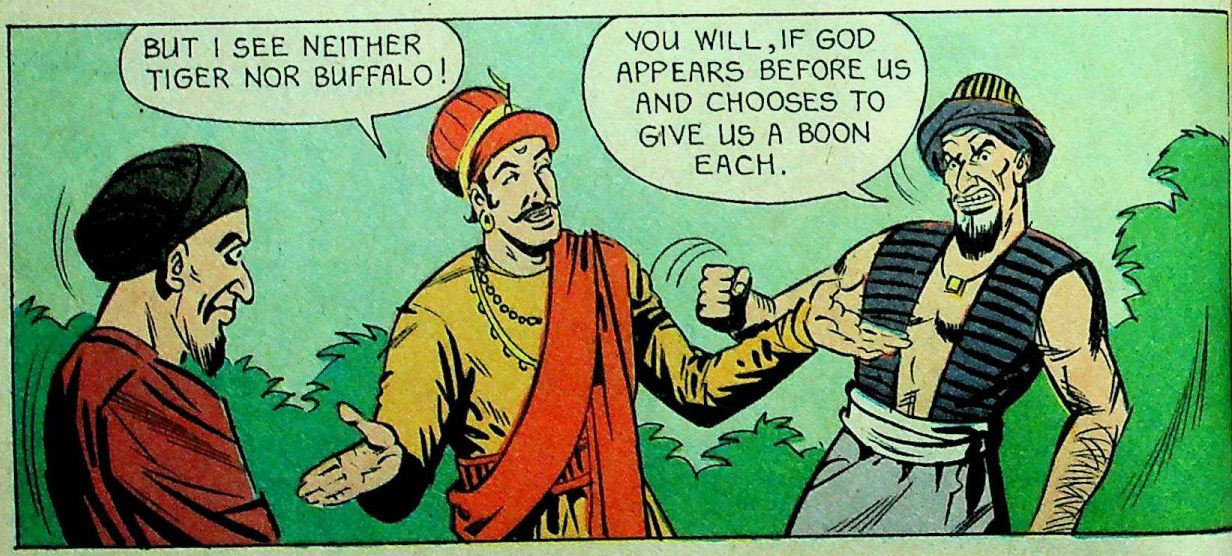

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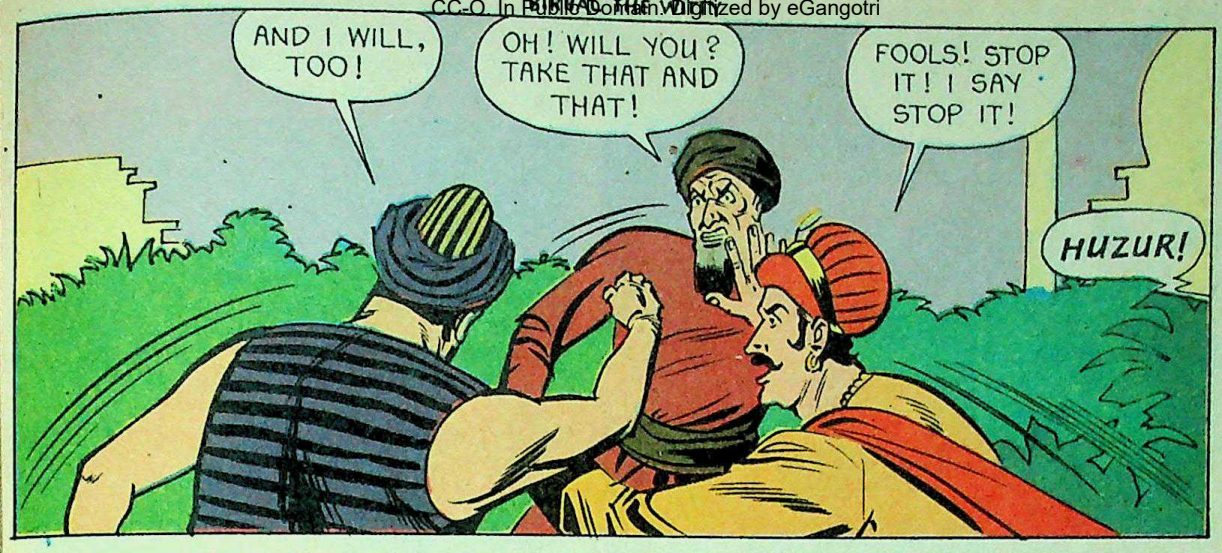

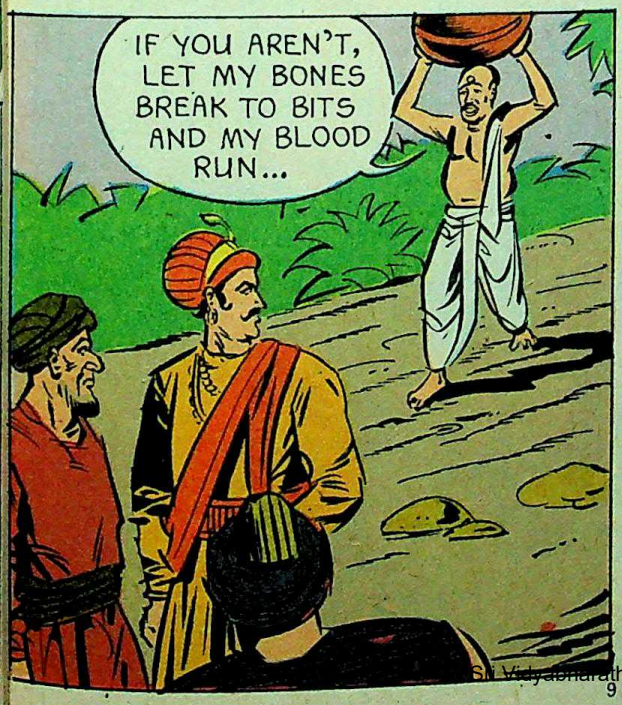

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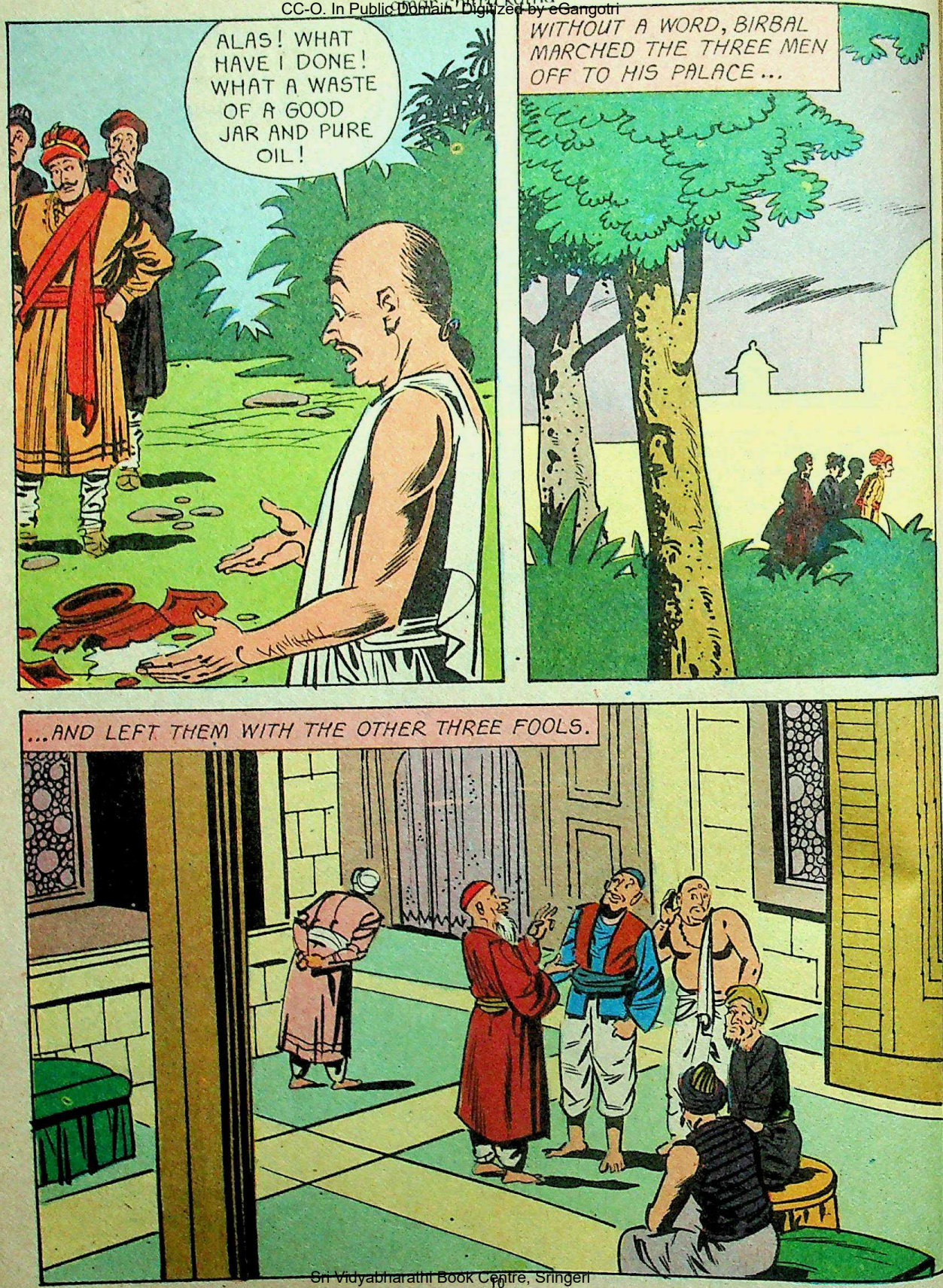

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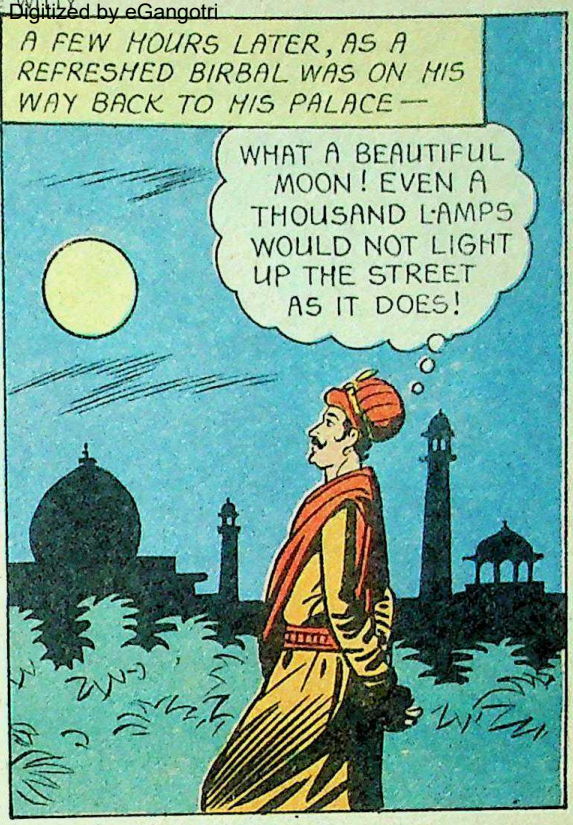

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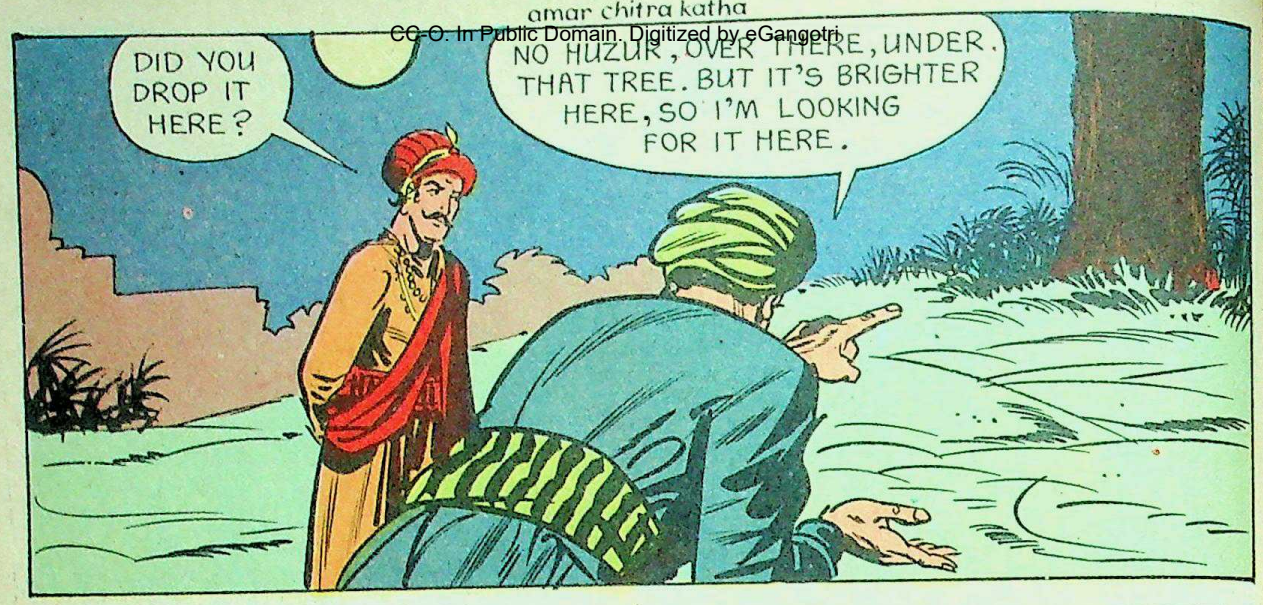

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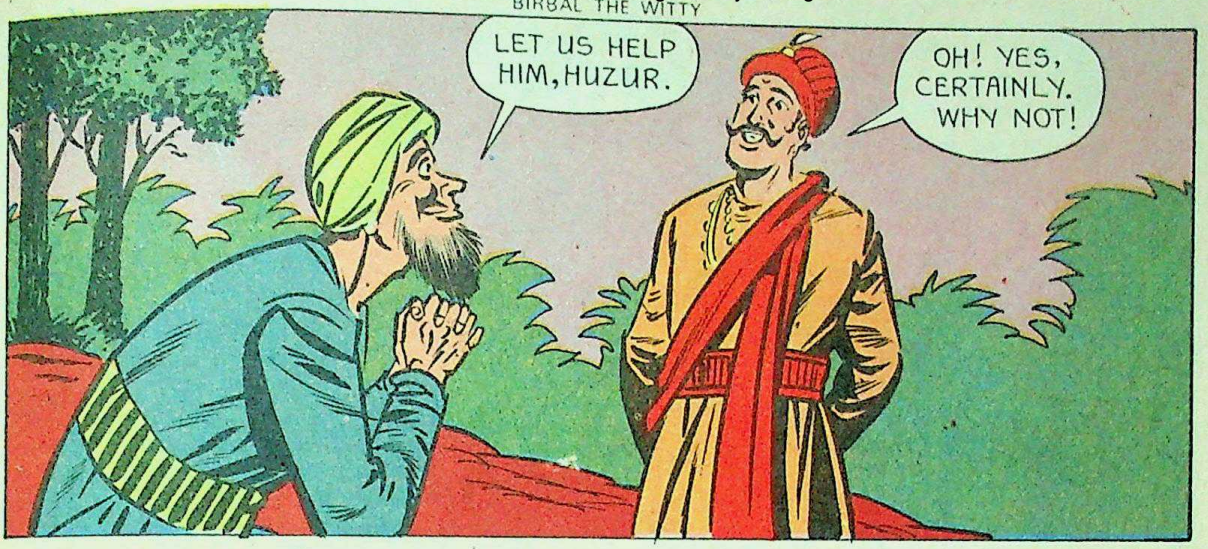

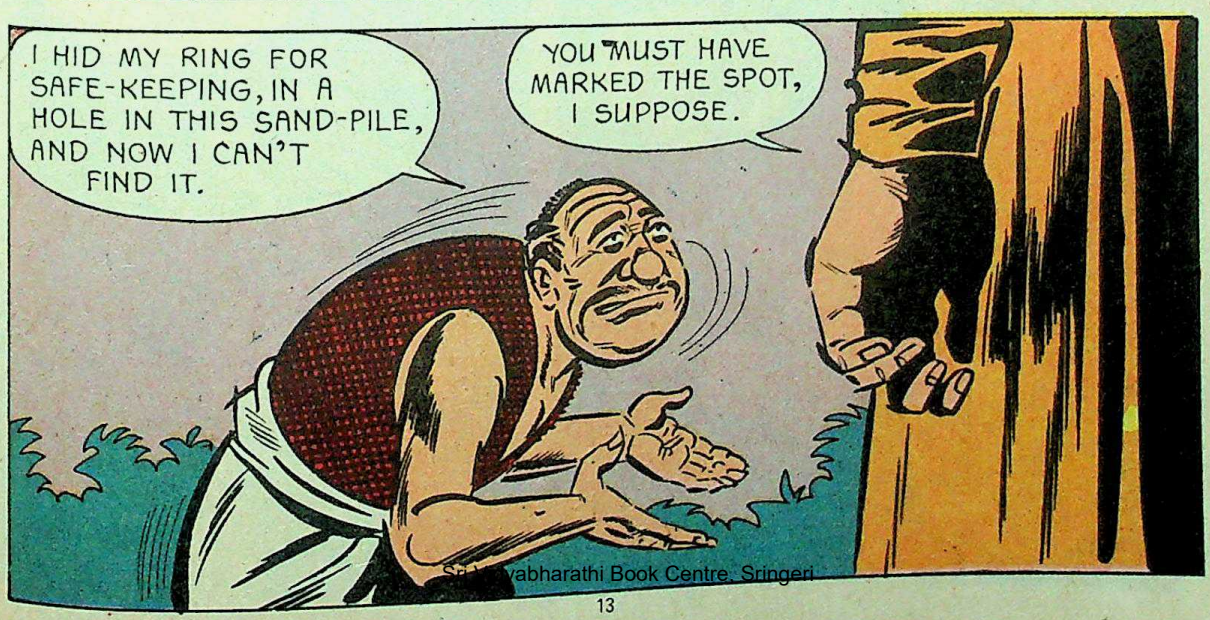

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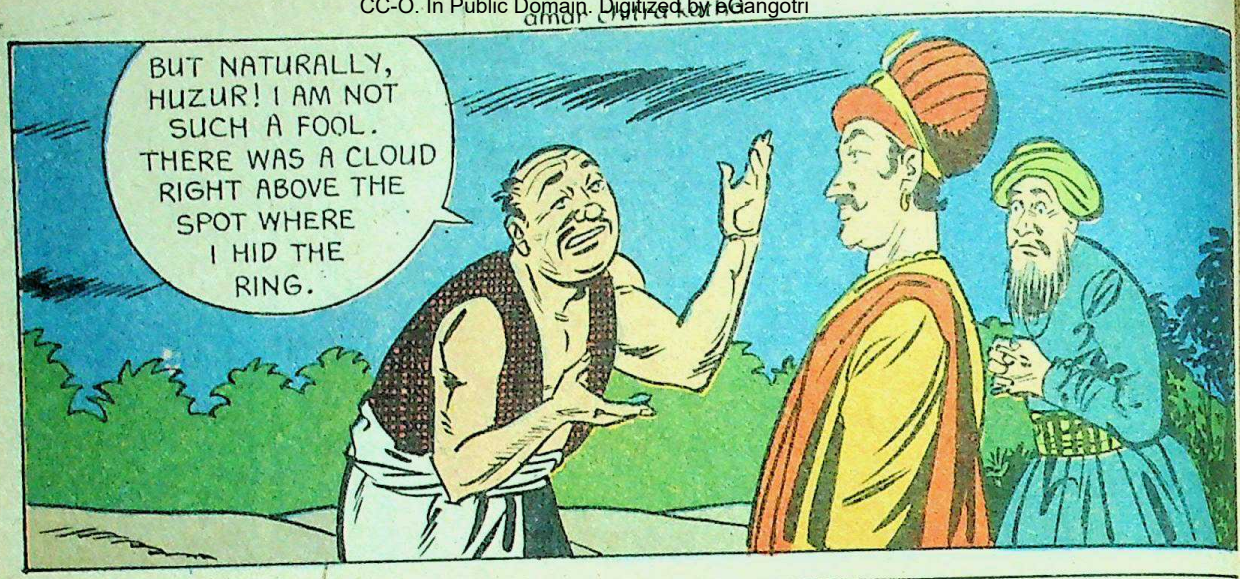

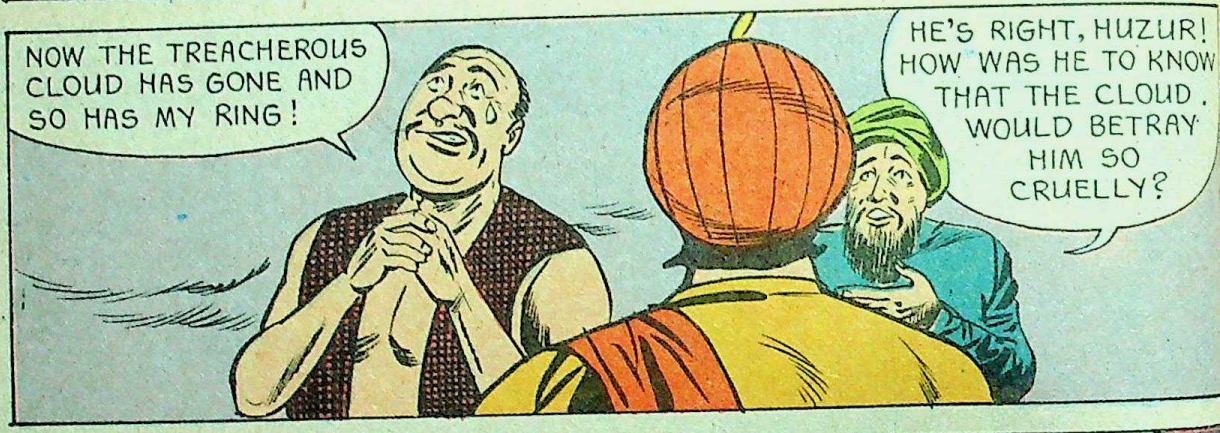

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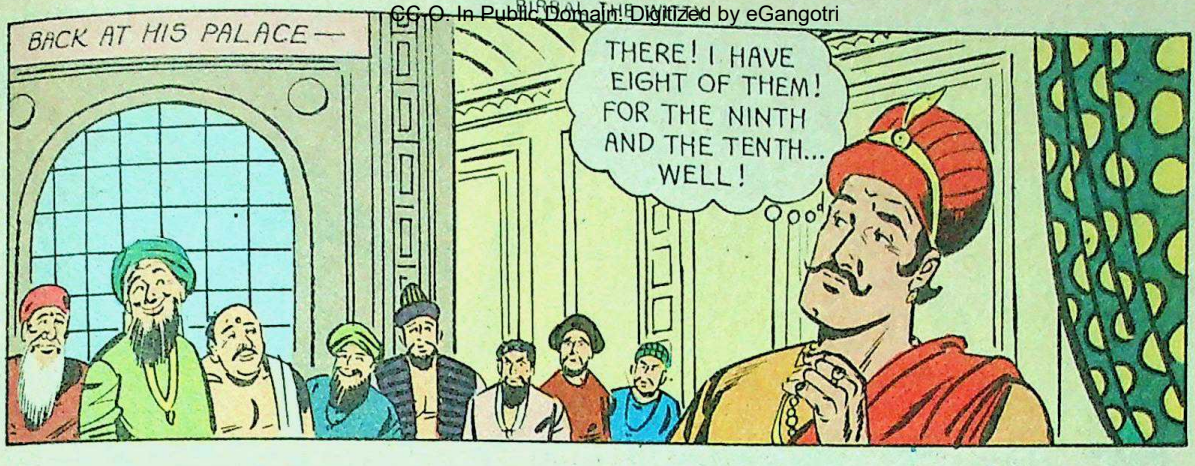

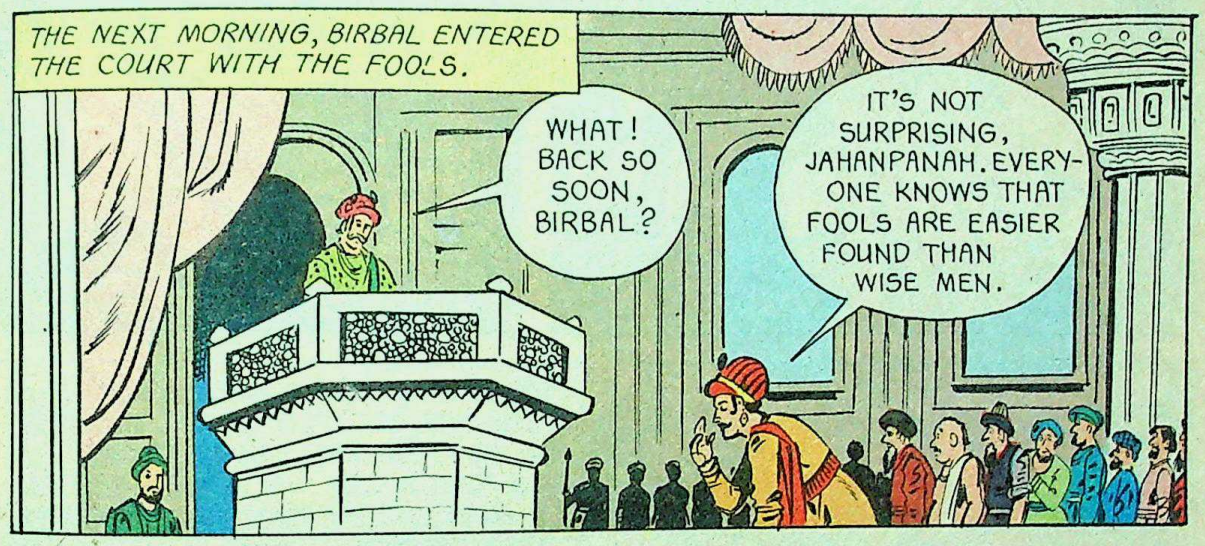

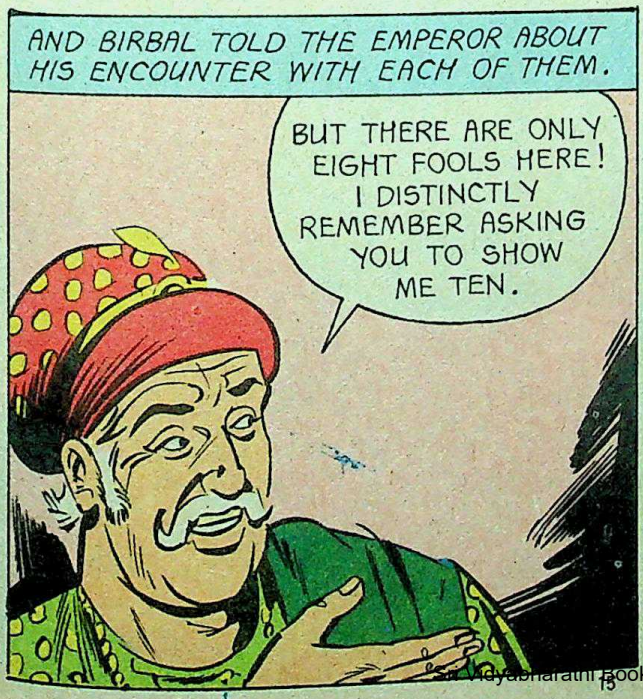

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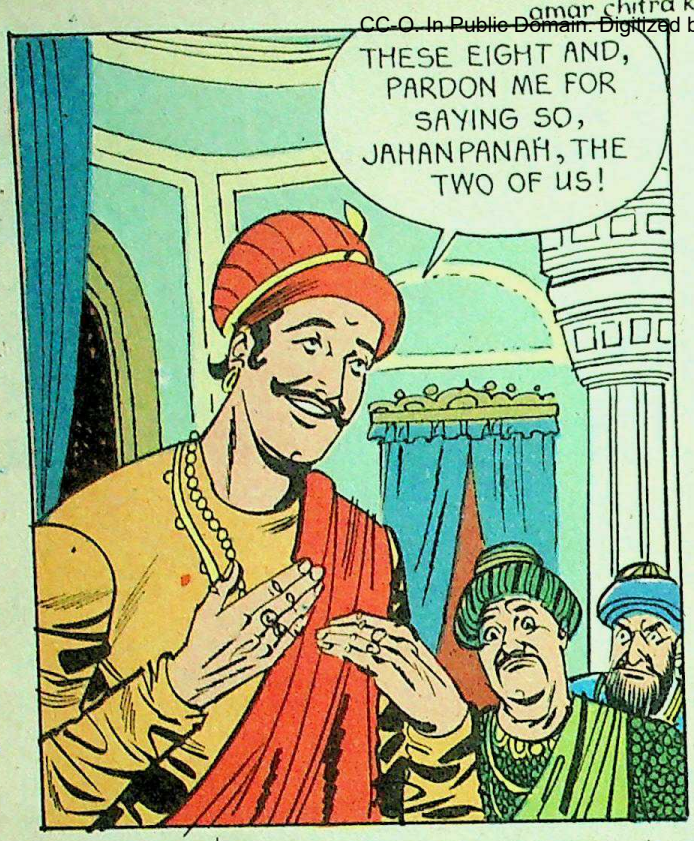

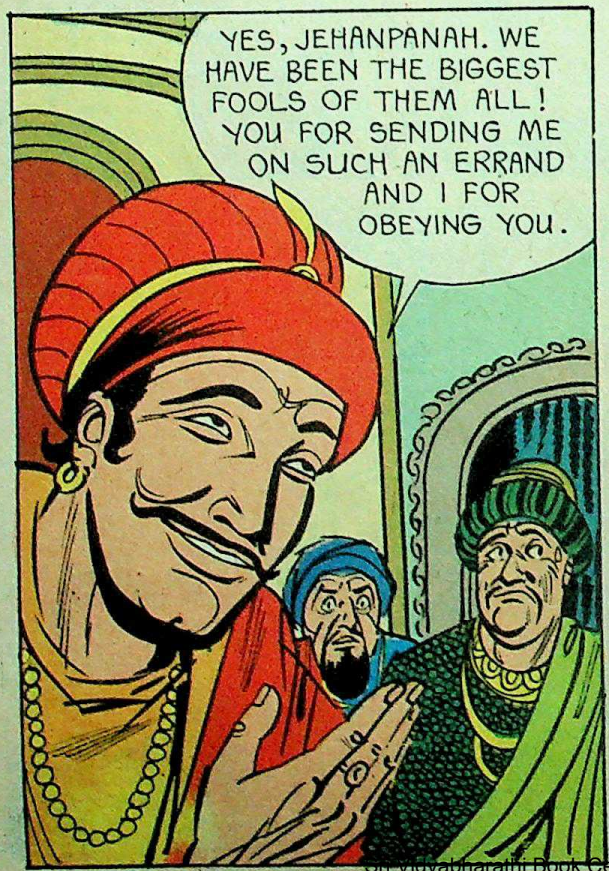

THE WHOLE COURT BURST OUT LAUGHING; BUT THE LOUDEST LAUGH WAS THAT OF THE EMPEROR, WHO WAS RENOWNED FOR HIS FINE SENSE OF HUMOUR.

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AS SOON AS BIRBAL JOINED THEM, AKBAR LOOKED UP INTO THE SKY.

I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW MANY CROWS WE HAVE IN AGRA.

THE COURTIERS LOOKED AT ONE ANOTHER IN DISMAY.

HOW ARE WE TO KNOW ?

IT WOULD TAKE US YEARS TO FIND OUT.

IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO COUNT THEM, JAHANPANAH! THEY DON'T STAY IN ONE PLACE.

NOBODY CAN ANSWER THAT QUESTION, JAHANPANAH. NOT EVEN BIRBAL!

AKBAR LOOKED AT BIRBAL.

THERE ARE THIRTY-THREE THOUSAND, NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-ONE, TO BE EXACT.

HIS PROMPT, CONFIDENT ANSWER AMAZED EVEN THE EMPEROR.

BIRBAL! HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE? YOU WILL BE SEVERELY PUNISHED IF YOU ARE WRONG.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT I AM RIGHT, JAHANPANAH.

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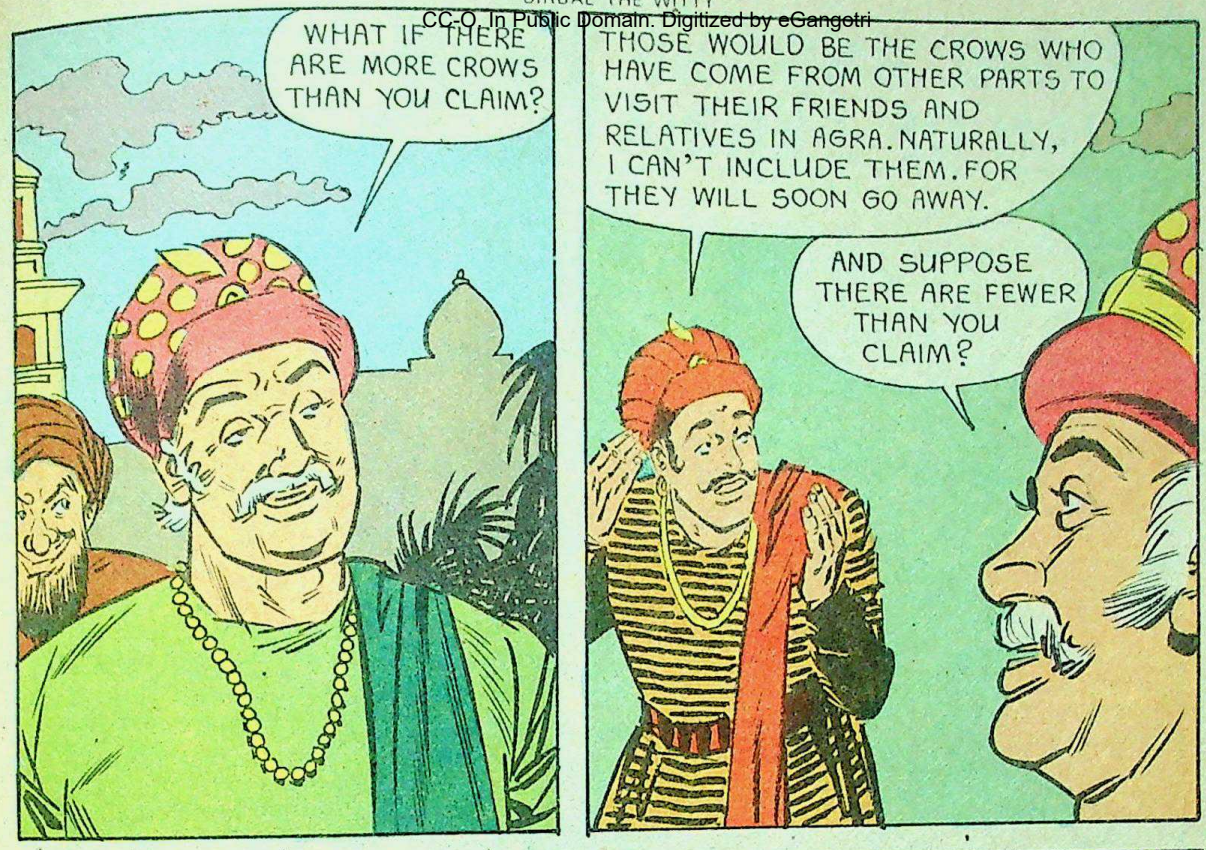

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BIRBAL AND THE SHAH OF PERSIA

BIRBAL'S FAME AS THE WISEST, THE WITTIEST OF COURTIERS, HAD REACHED EVEN THE EARS OF THE SHAH OF DISTANT PERSIA.

I MUST INVITE HIM TO MY COURT AND SEE IF HE REALLY IS AS CLEVER AS HIS REPUTATION CLAIMS.

A FEW MONTHS LATER, BIRBAL CAME TO THE PERSIAN CAPITAL.

COME, HUZUR. YOU MAY PAY YOUR RESPECTS TO OUR SHAH. HE IS IMPATIENT TO SEE YOU. LET ME LEAD YOU TO HIS PRESENCE.

AS BIRBAL ENTERED THE SHAH'S DARBAR, A STRANGE SIGHT MET HIS EYES.

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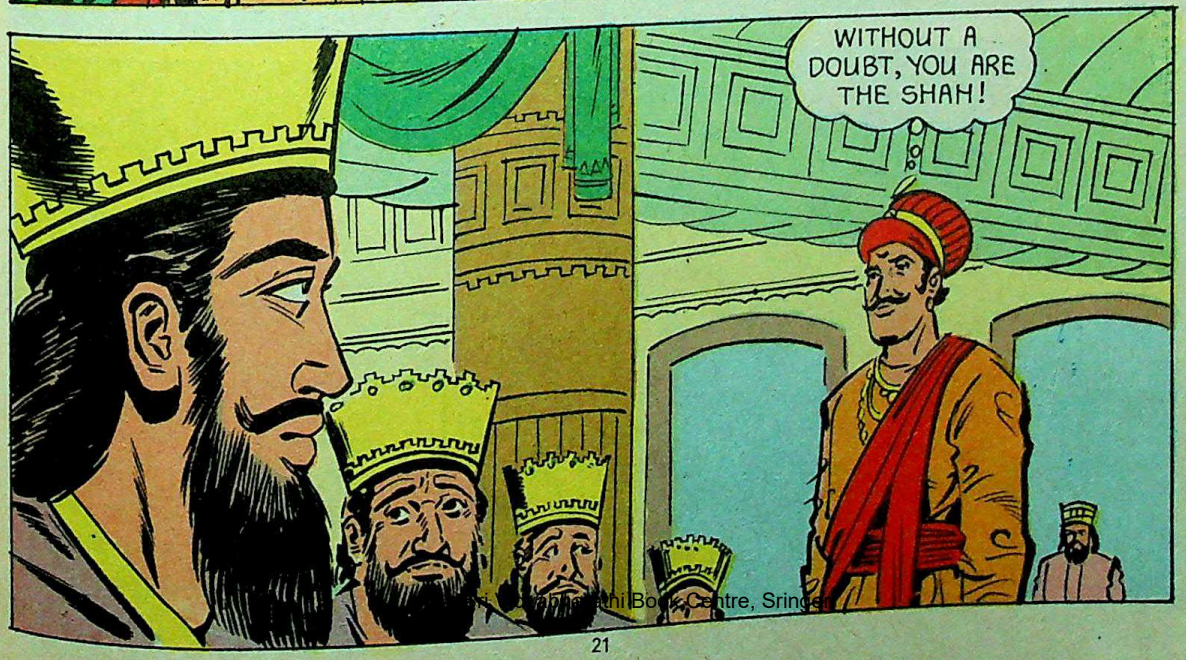

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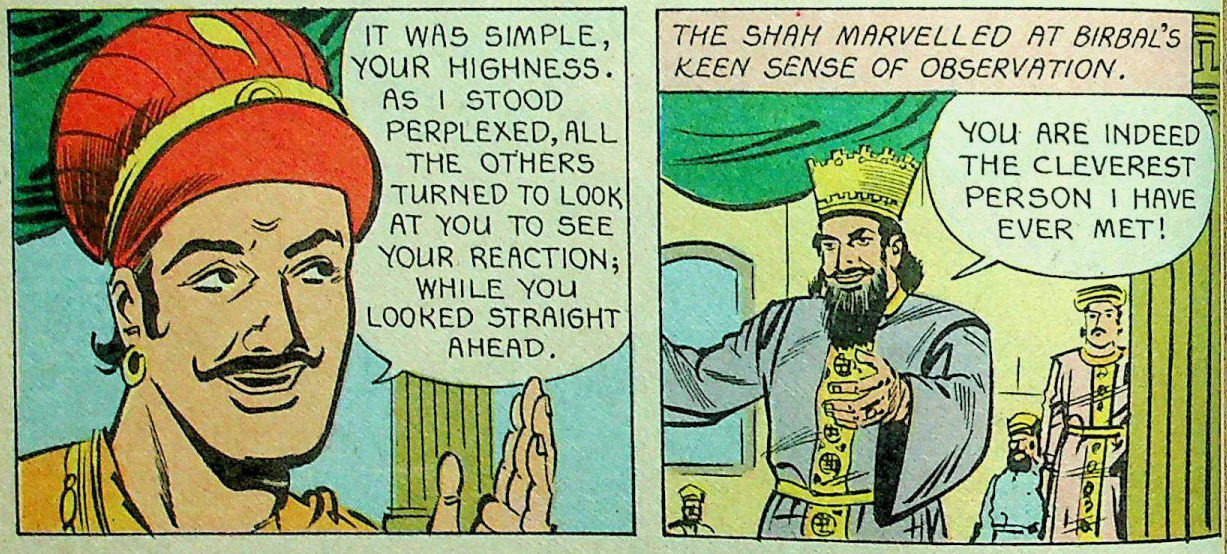

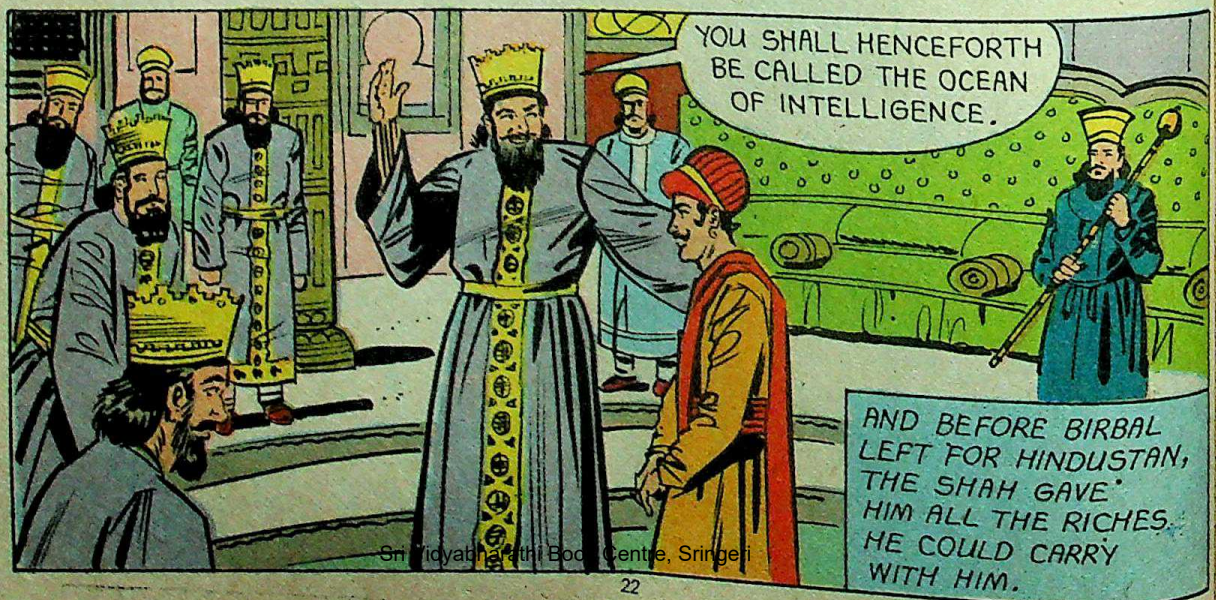

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THE SEAL

AKBAR HAD THE HABIT OF DISGUISING HIMSELF AND WANDERING ABOUT IN THE CITY — A HABIT BIRBAL DIDN'T APPROVE OF, AS HE THOUGHT IT UNSAFE.

ALL RIGHT, BIRBAL, I'M OFF.

I STILL SAY YOU OUGHT TO GIVE UP THIS HABIT; JAHANPANAH. AN EMPEROR'S LIFE IS PRECIOUS AND MUST BE WELL PROTECTED.

LATER, AS AKBAR WALKED DOWN THE STREET—

I THINK I'M BEING FOLLOWED.

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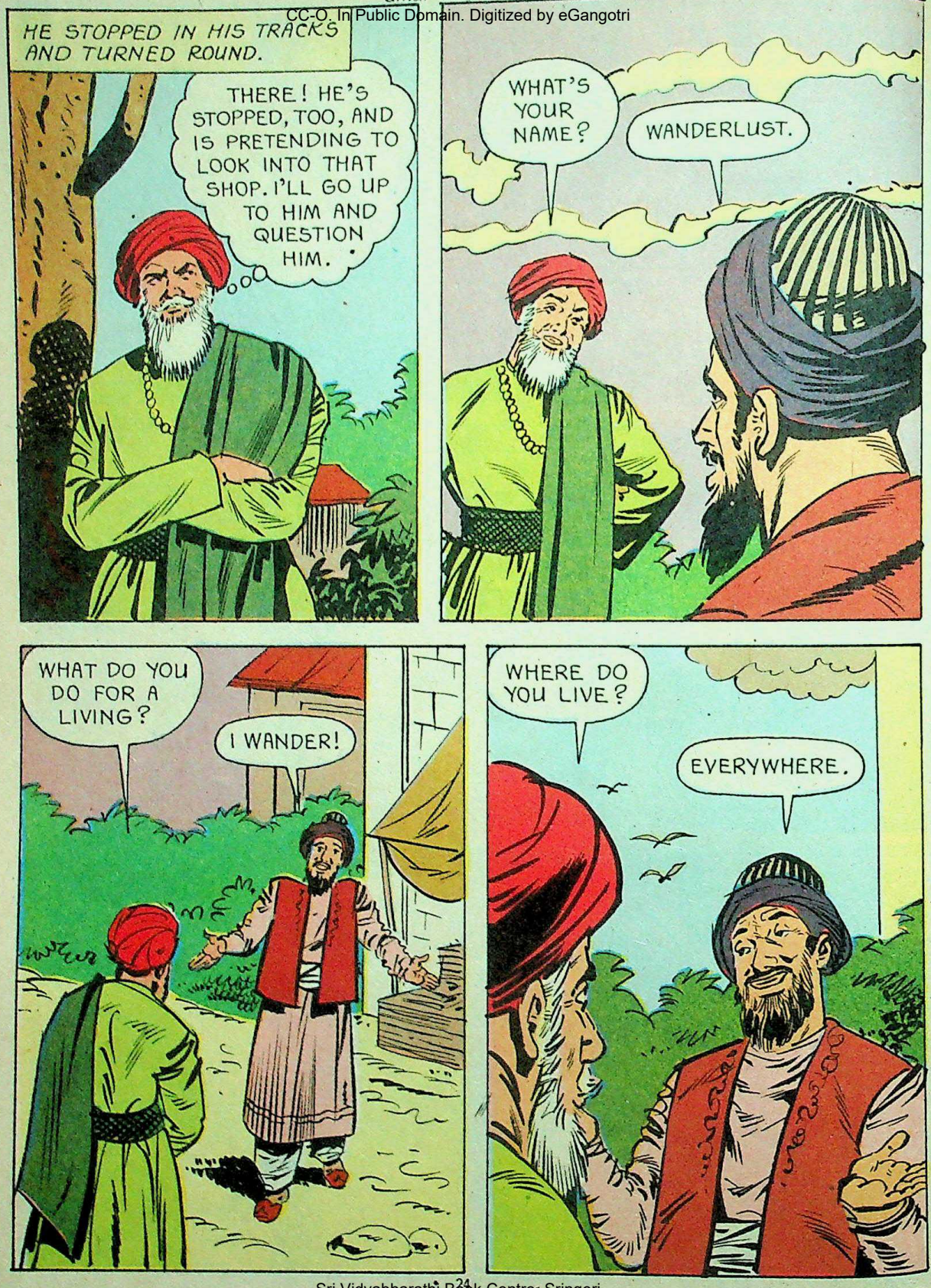

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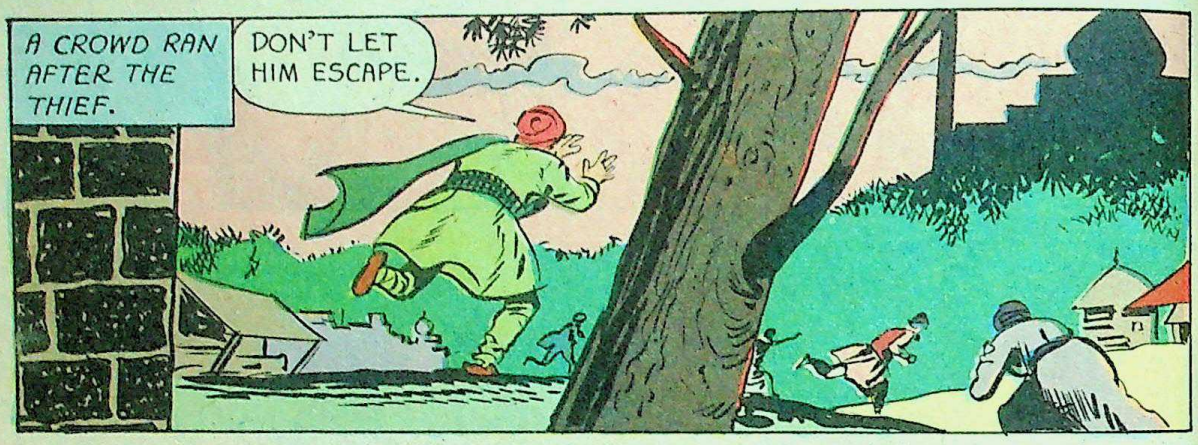

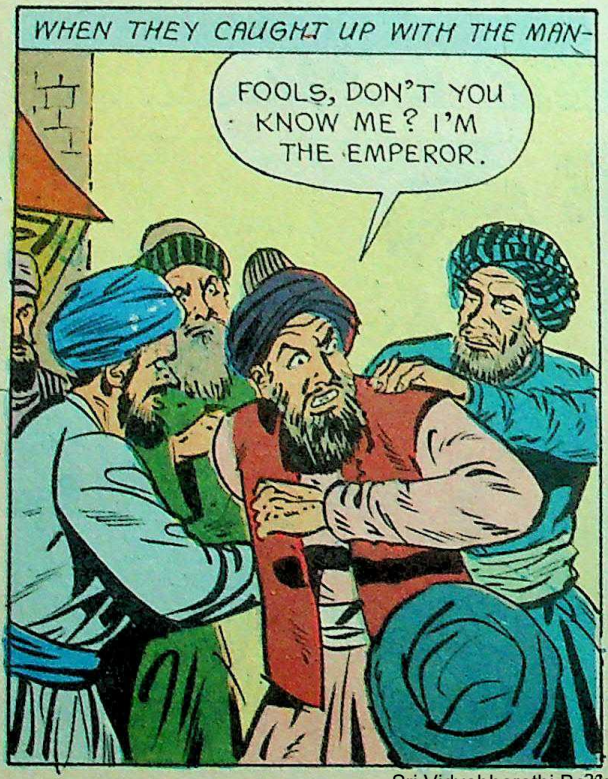

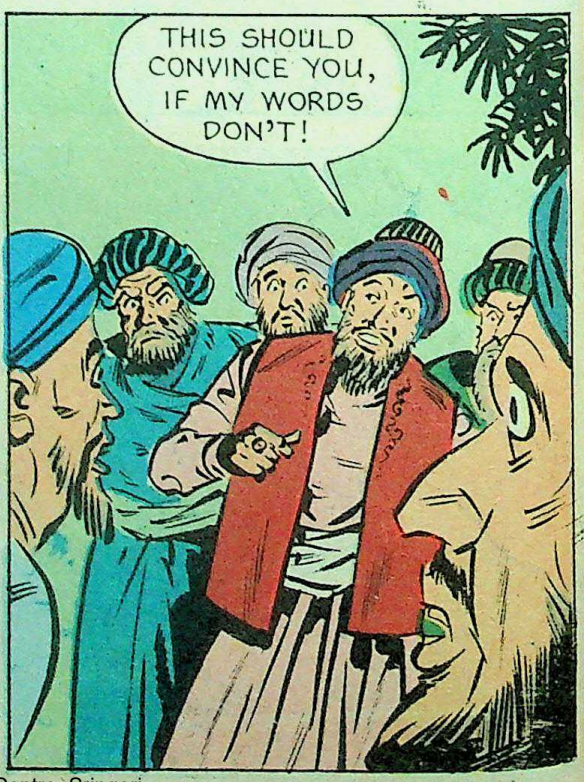

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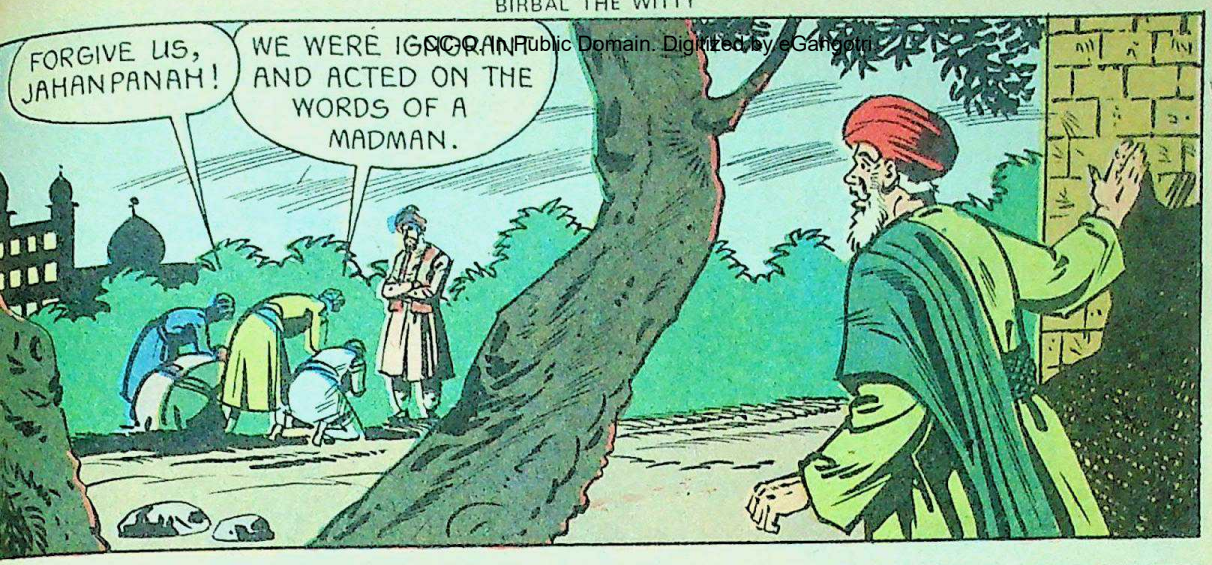

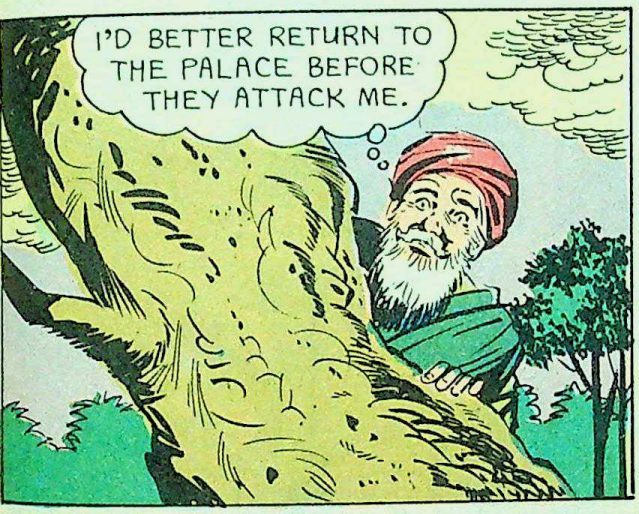

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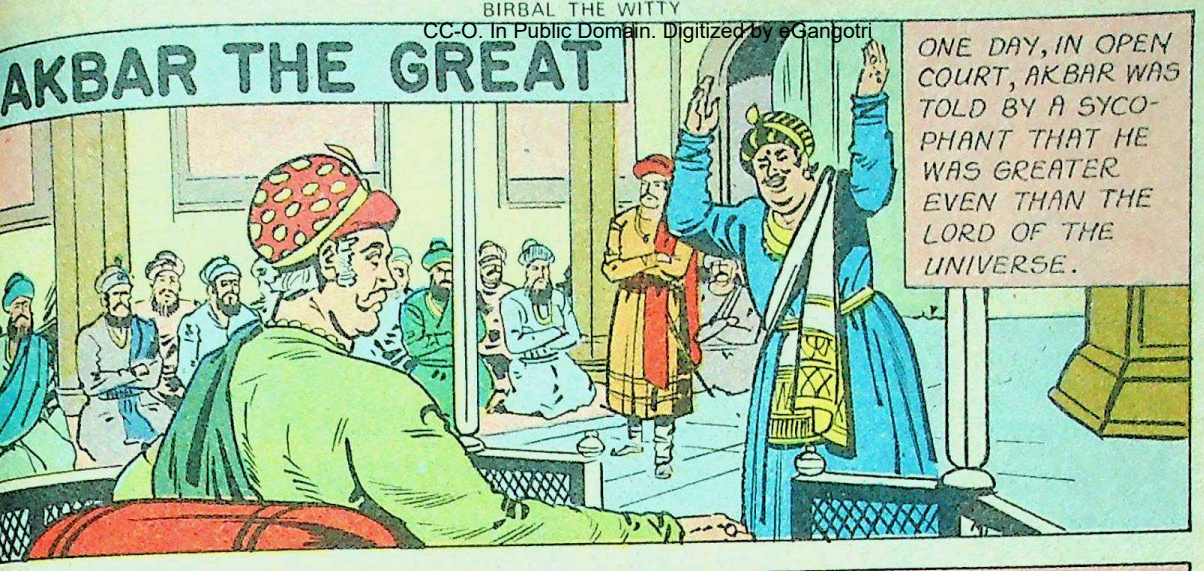

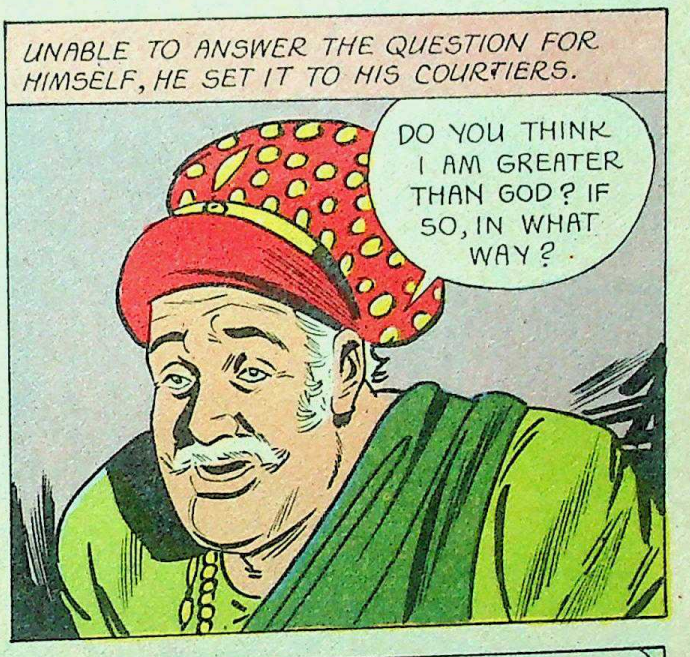

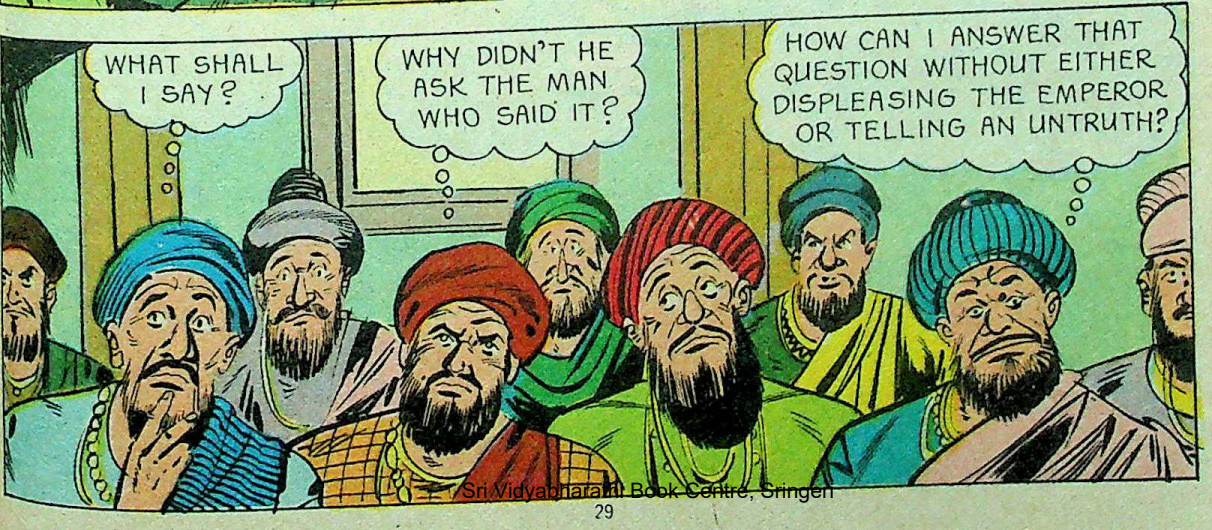

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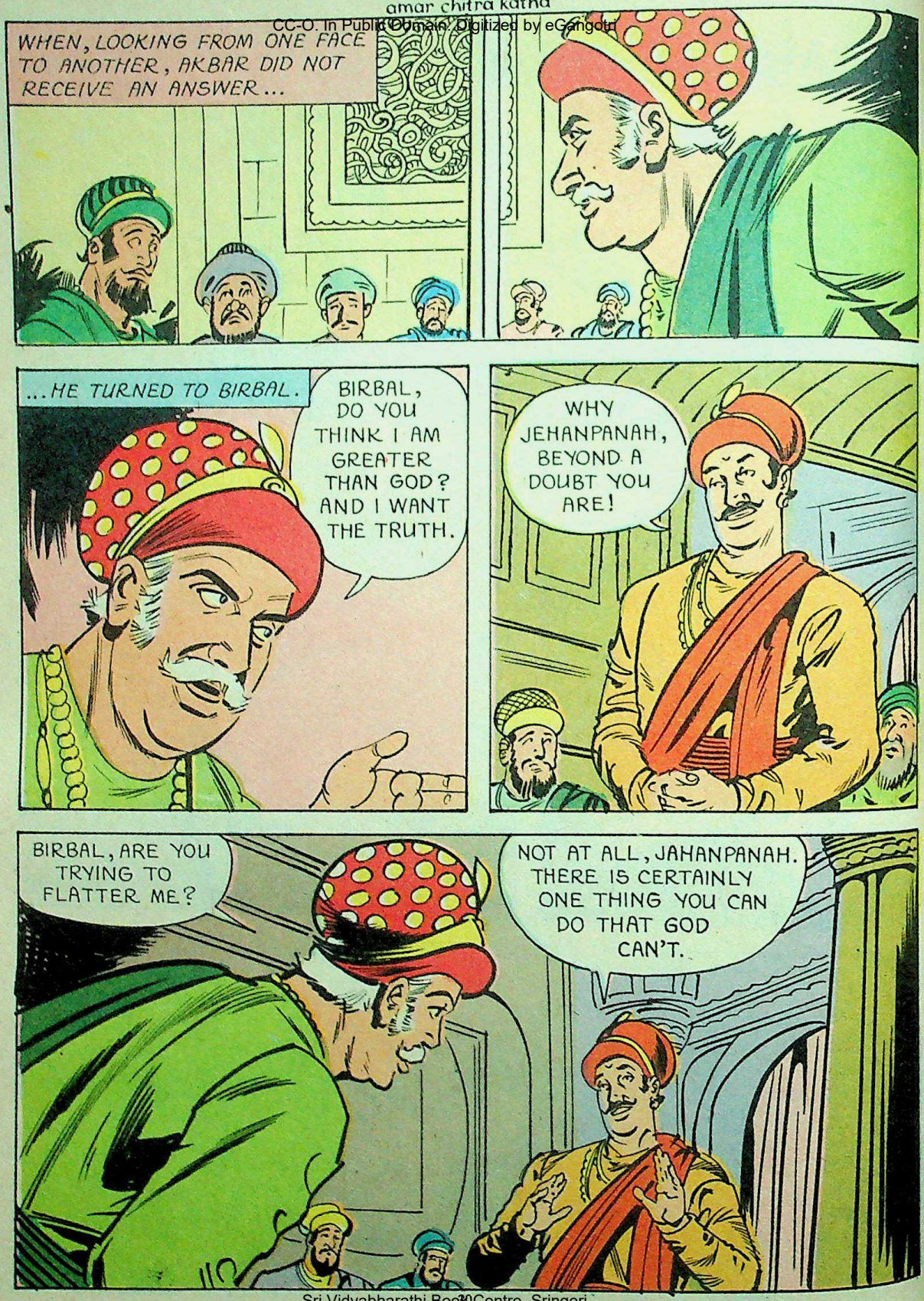

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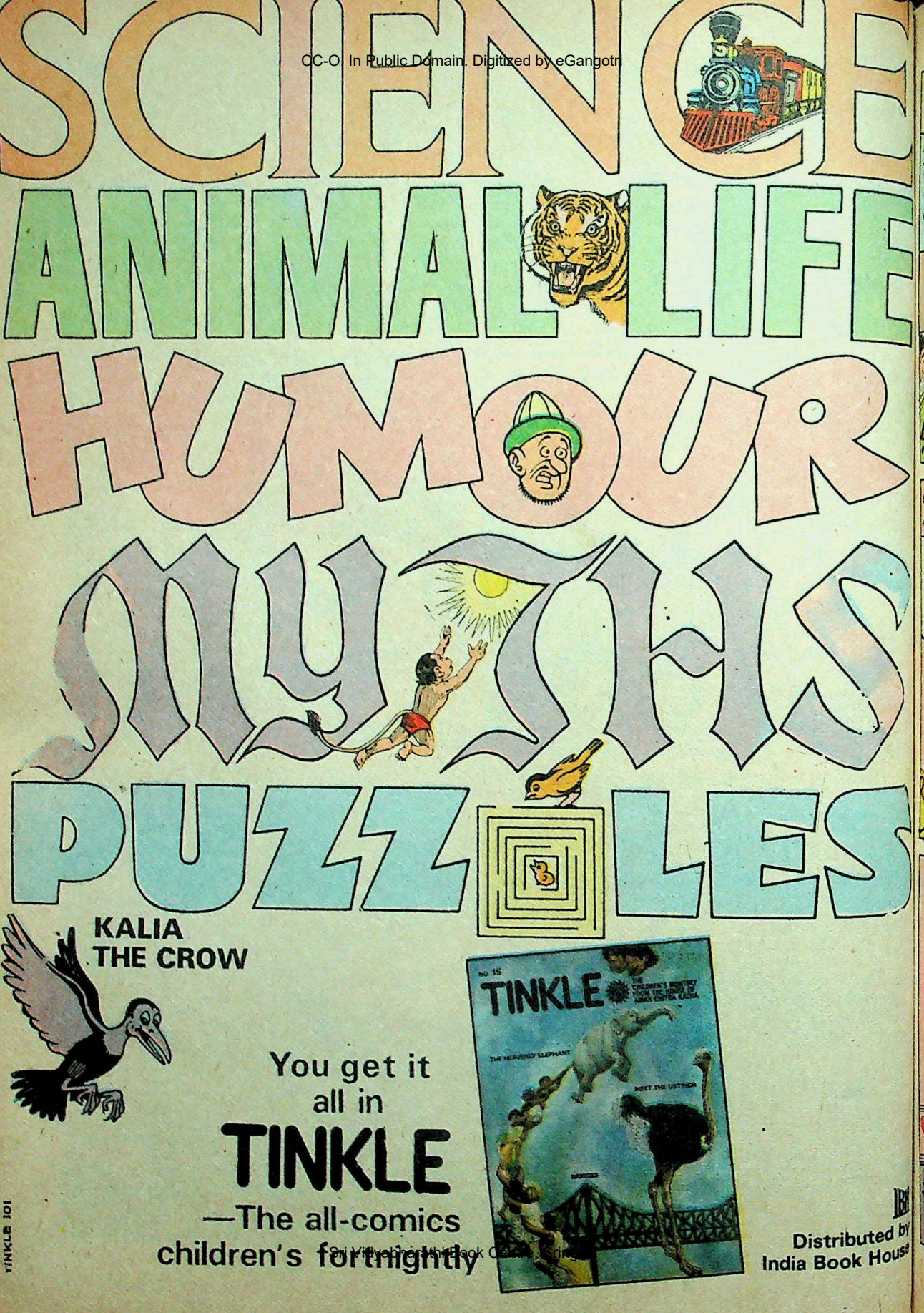
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THE PUNISHMENT

AFTER THE DAY'S WORK WAS DONE, AKBAR, THE MUGHAL EMPEROR, LIKED TO PASS A FEW LIGHT-HEARTED MOMENTS WITH HIS COURTIERS. HE OFTEN POSED STRANGE QUESTIONS TO PROVOKE AMUSING REPLIES.

ONE MORNING, AS AKBAR WAS GETTING DRESSED, HIS GRANDSON CAME RUNNING TO HIM.

BABA, BABA, THERE IS SOMETHING BLACK IN YOUR MOUSTACHE! BEND DOWN, AND I WILL TAKE IT OUT!

O... OU... OUCH!

THAT WAS NAUGHTY OF YOU! WHY DID YOU DO IT?

HA! HA! BABA! I FOOLED YOU!

NOW, GO AND PLAY. I'VE GOT WORK TO DO.

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AKBAR LEFT FOR HIS DARBAR.

AHA, TODAY I HAVE A PROBLEM WHICH WILL BAFFLE EVERYONE — EVEN BIRBAL, MY WITTY MINISTER! HE THINKS HE HAS ALL THE ANSWERS, BUT HE'LL BE FOXED THIS TIME!

SOMEONE PULLED A HAIR FROM MY MOUSTACHE THIS MORNING. I WANT HIM PUNISHED!

CAN ANYONE HERE THINK OF SUITABLE PUNISHMENT FOR THIS DEED?

AFTER A MOMENT'S SHOCKED SILENCE, THERE WAS A CHORUS OF SUGGESTIONS.

THE MAN SHOULD BE FLOGGED A THOUSAND TIMES!

HANG HIM, JAHANPANAH!

THAT'S TOO MILD! THE SCOUNDREL SHOULD BE IMPRISONED FOR LIFE!

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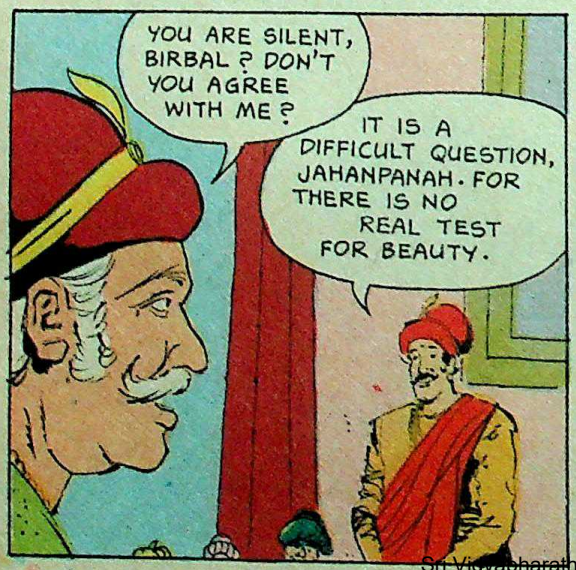

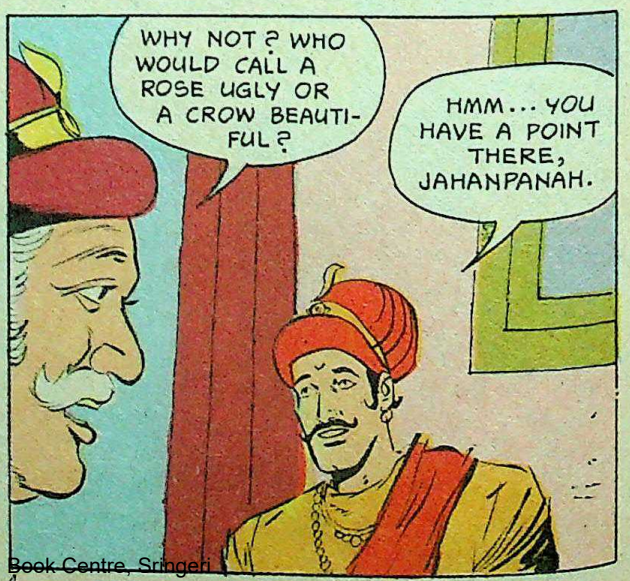

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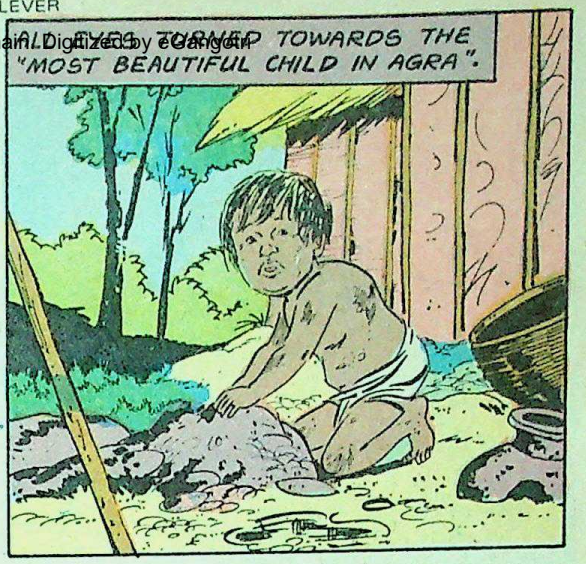

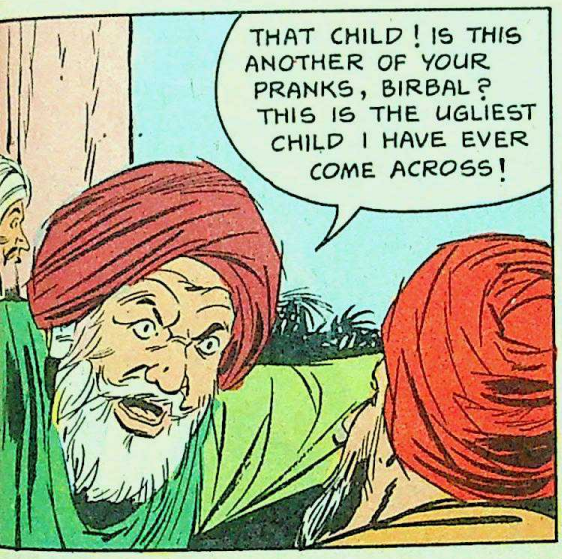

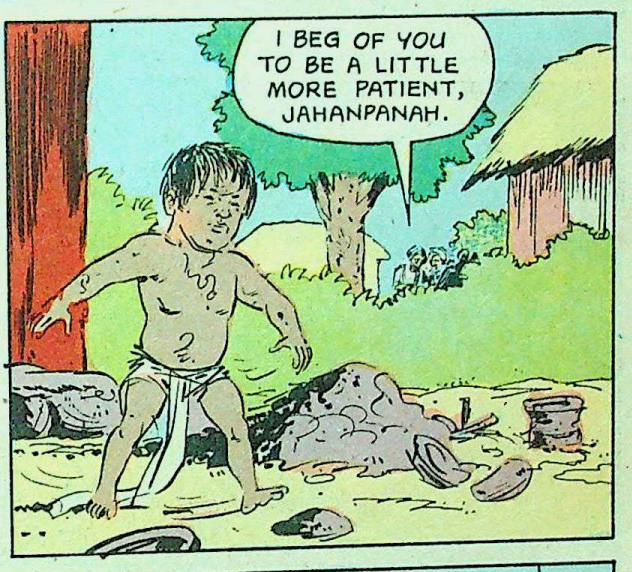

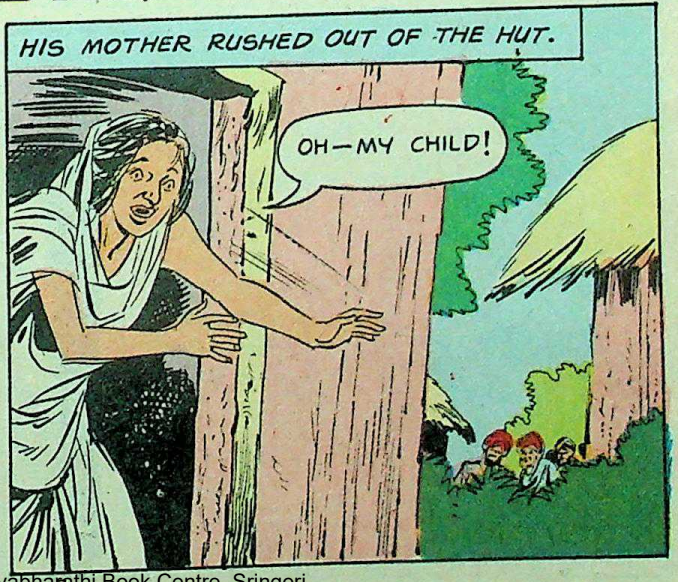

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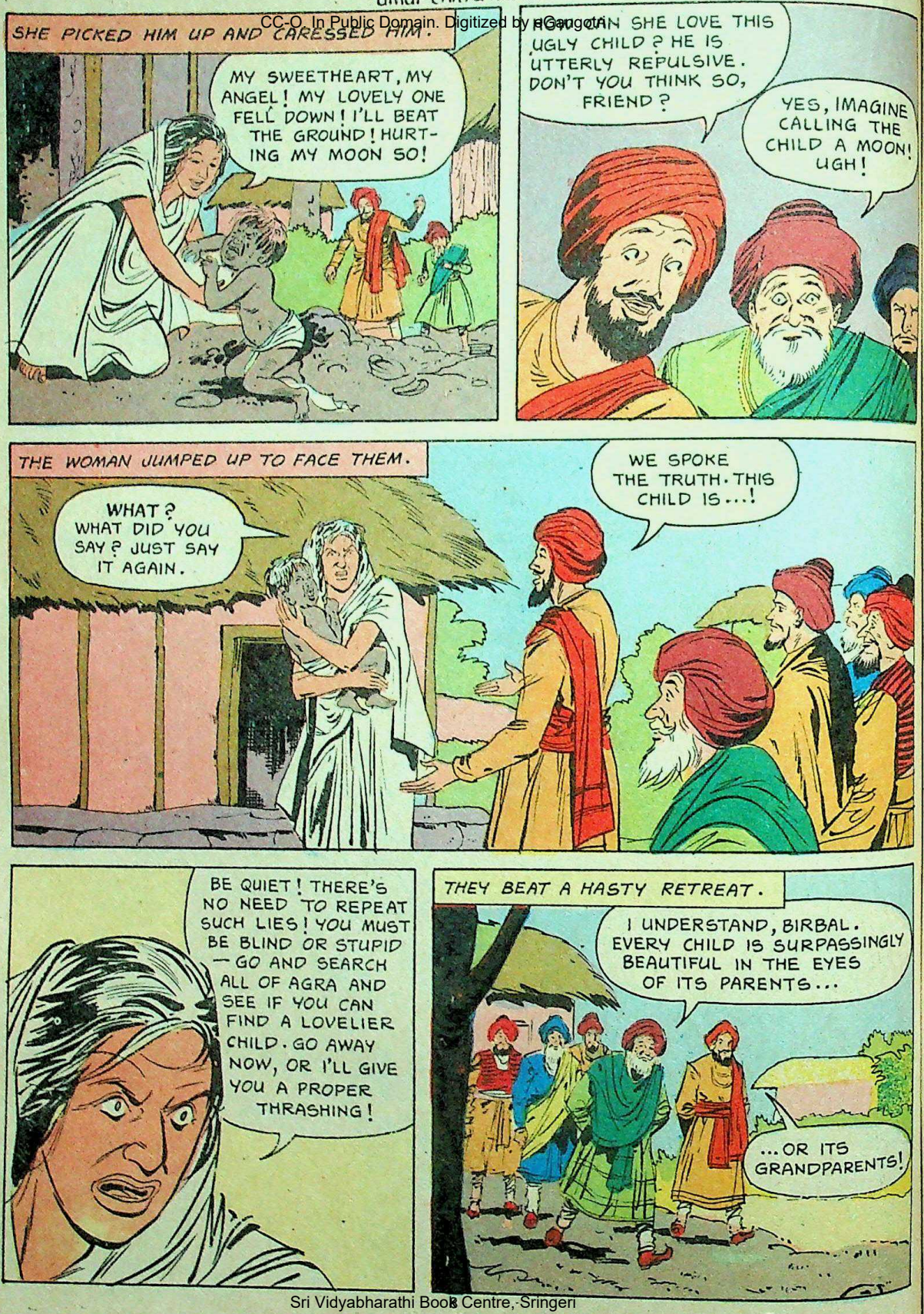

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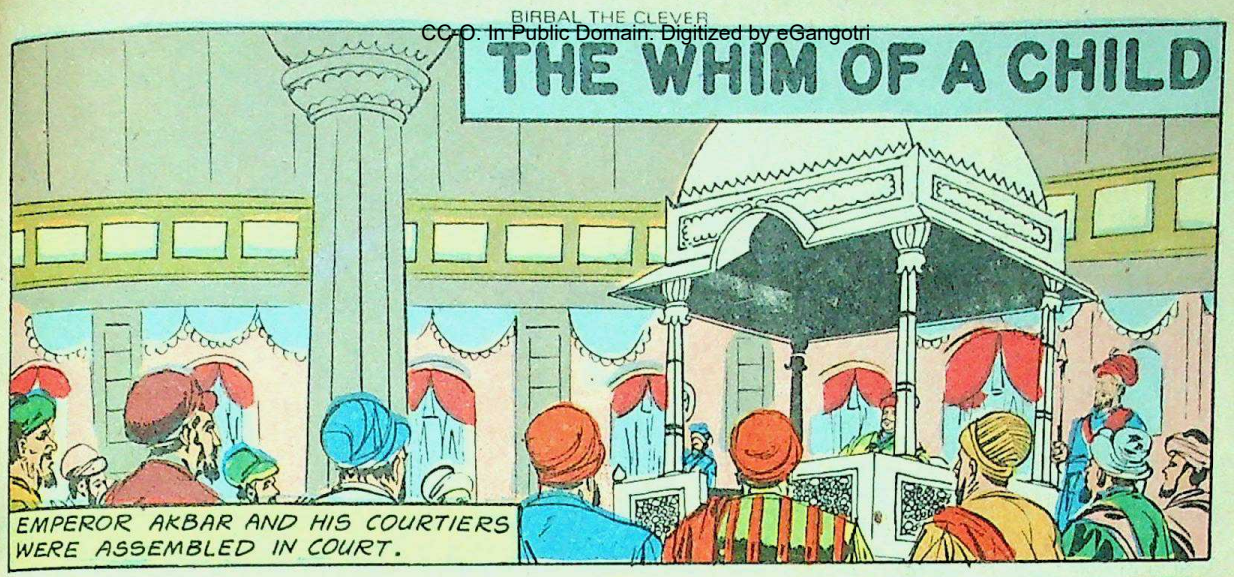
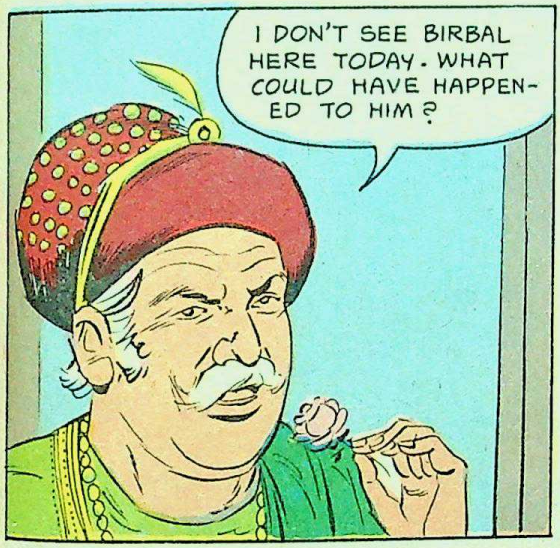
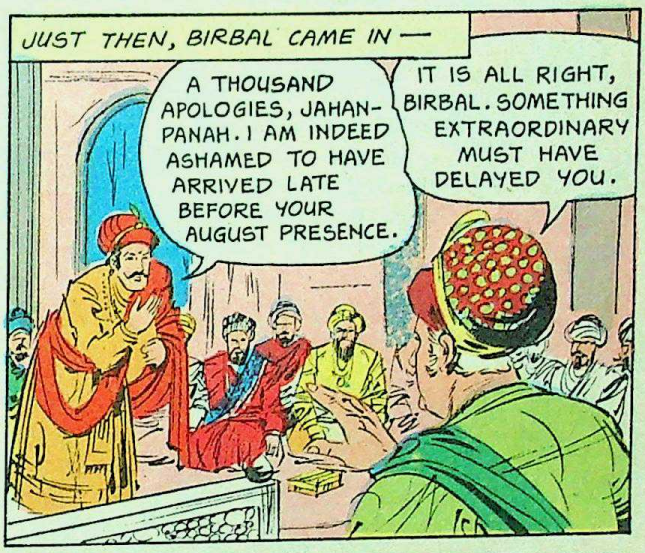
THE WHIM OF A CHILD







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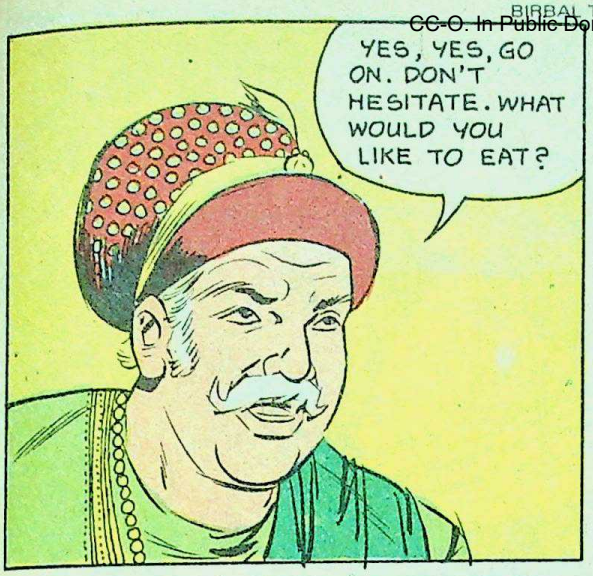

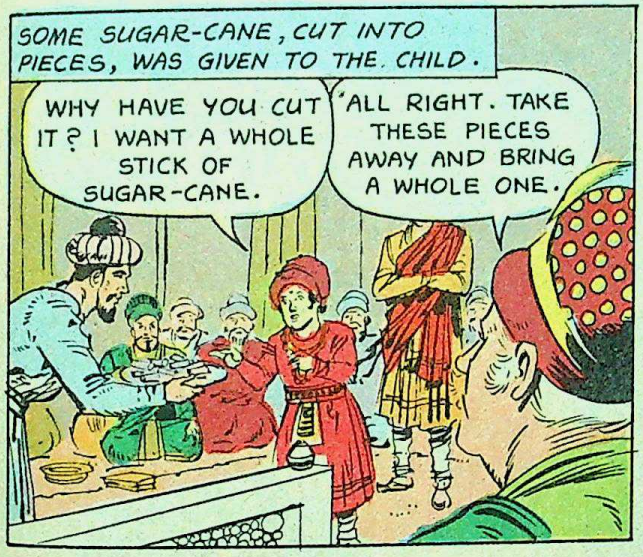

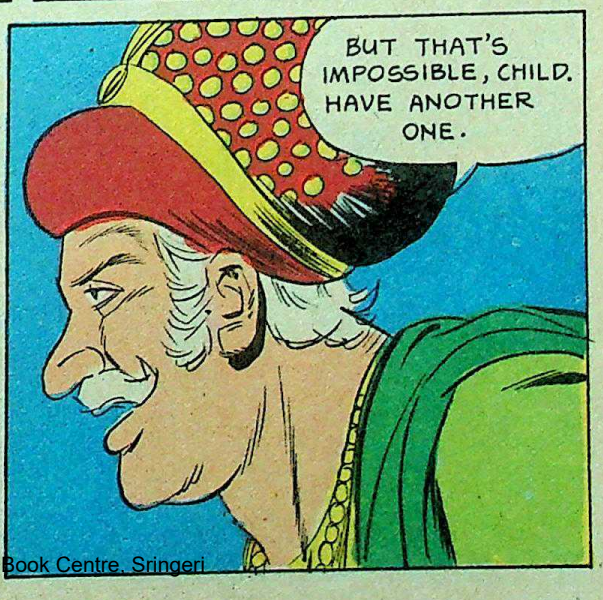

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THE MAN WHO BROUGHT ILL LUCK

THE DAY'S WORK IN AKBAR'S PALACE BEGAN VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING.

THERE GOES GULSHAN, THE INAUSPICIOUS ONE. WE HAVE SEEN HIS FACE THE FIRST THING THIS MORNING. WE WILL NOT GET ANY FOOD TODAY.

OR, PERHAPS, A WORSE CALAMITY WILL BEFALL US!

THAT DAY, THE EMPEROR WOKE UP EARLIER THAN USUAL.

IS SOMEONE THERE?

THERE IS NO ONE ELSE AROUND. I DON'T WANT TO BE THE FIRST PERSON HE SEES THIS MORNING BUT....

GULSHAN WENT IN RELUCTANTLY.

JAHANPANAH....

MY SLIPPERS! GIVE ME MY SLIPPERS!

OH! IT'S THAT SERVANT WHOM EVERY-ONE AVOIDS!

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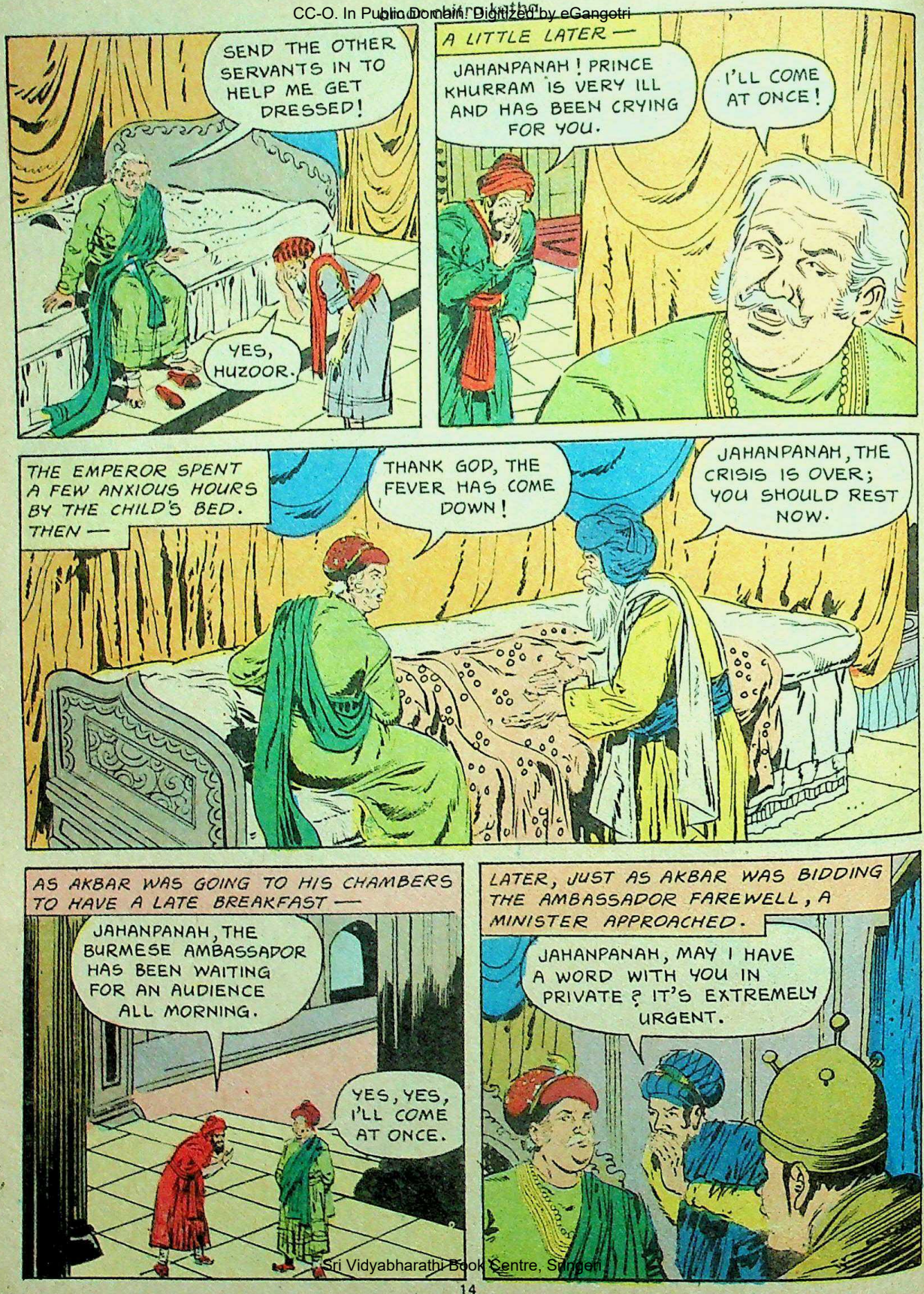

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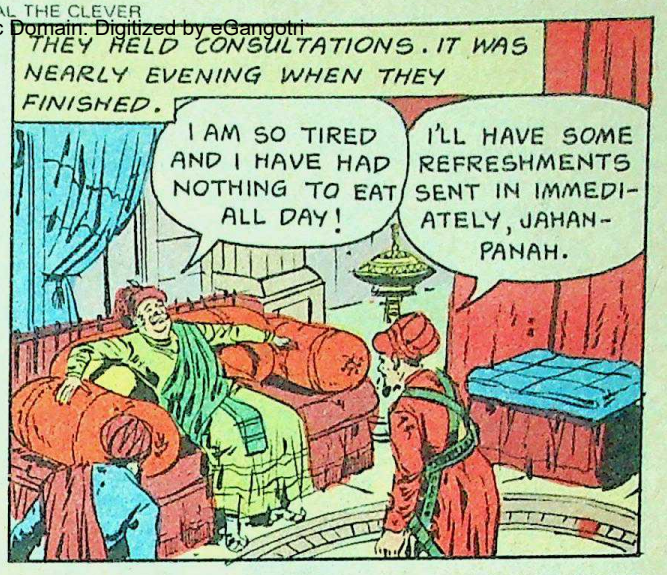

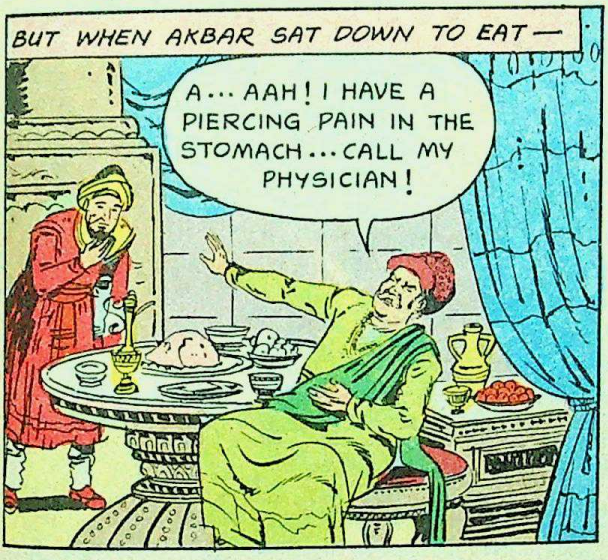

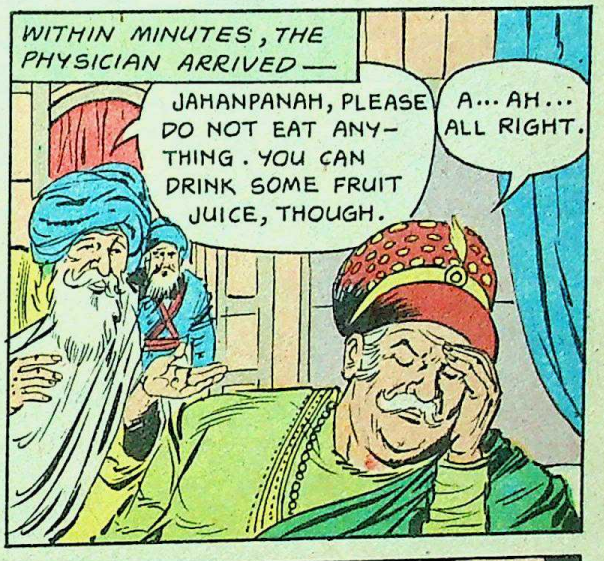

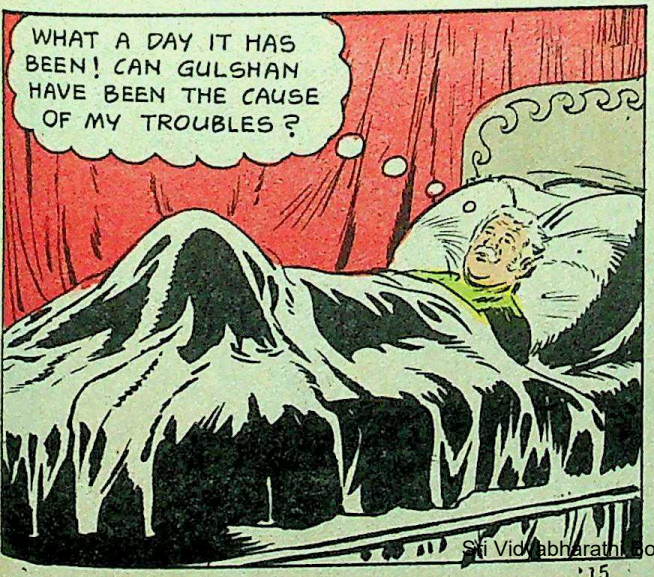

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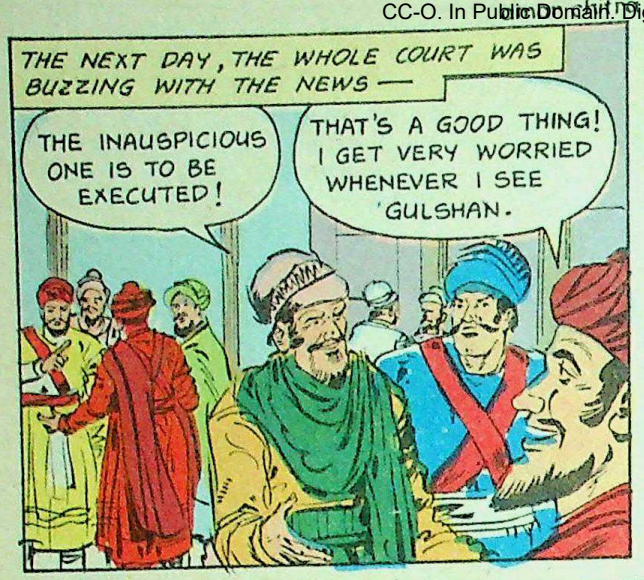

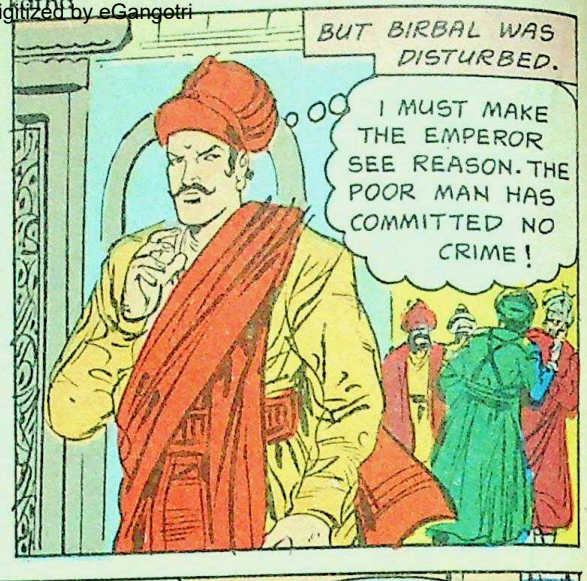

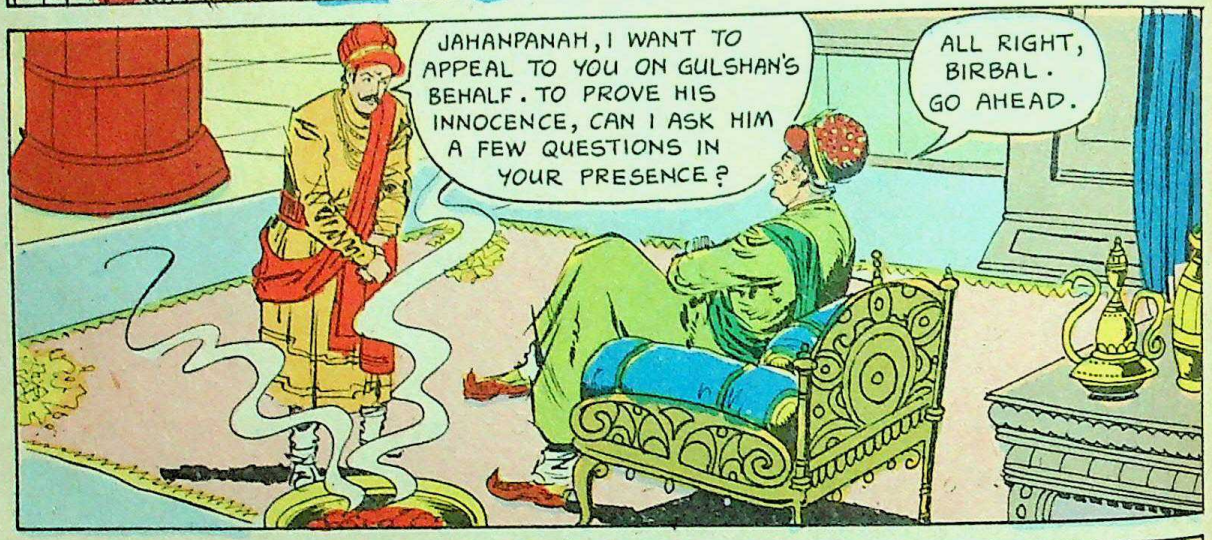

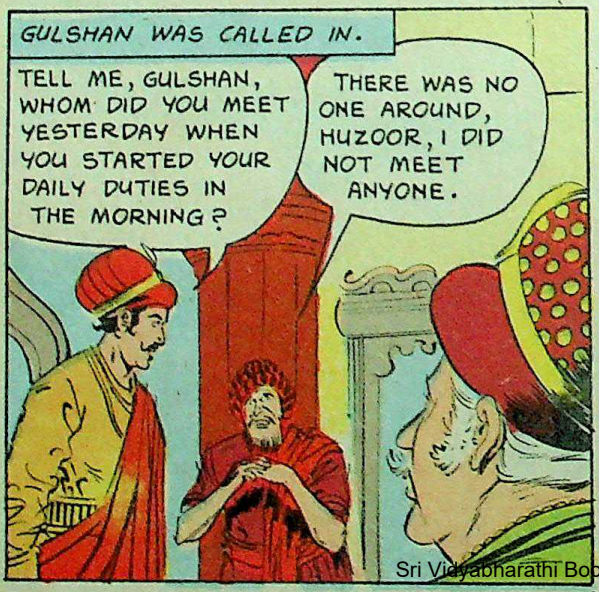

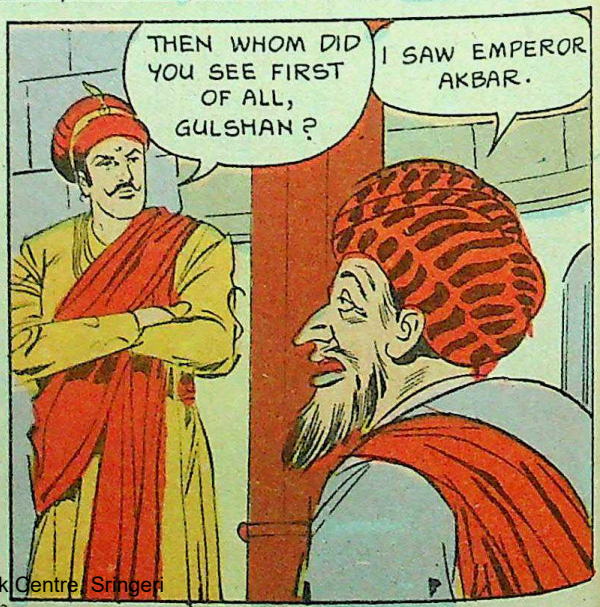

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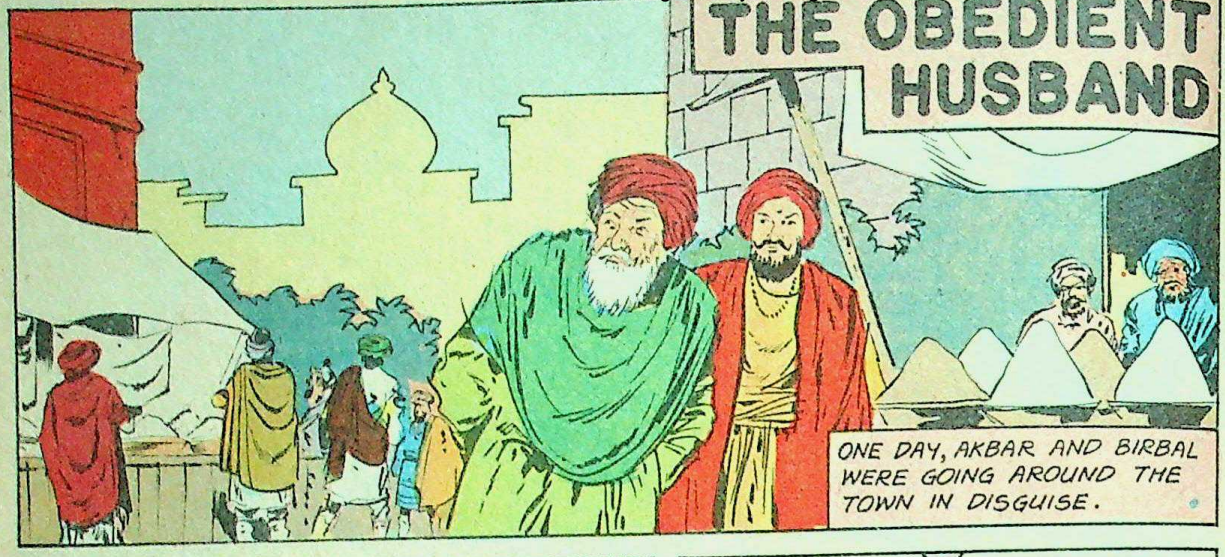
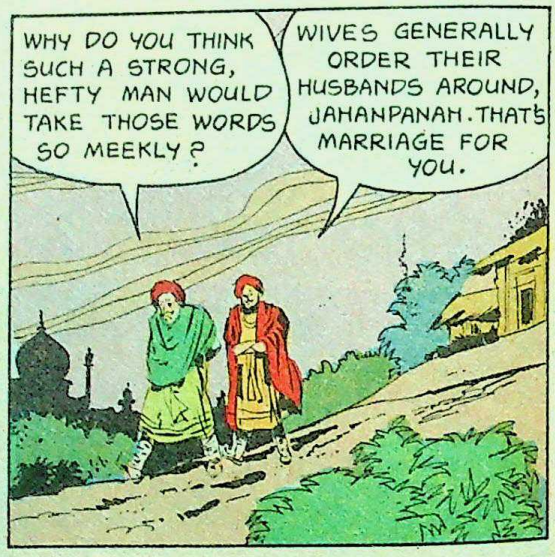
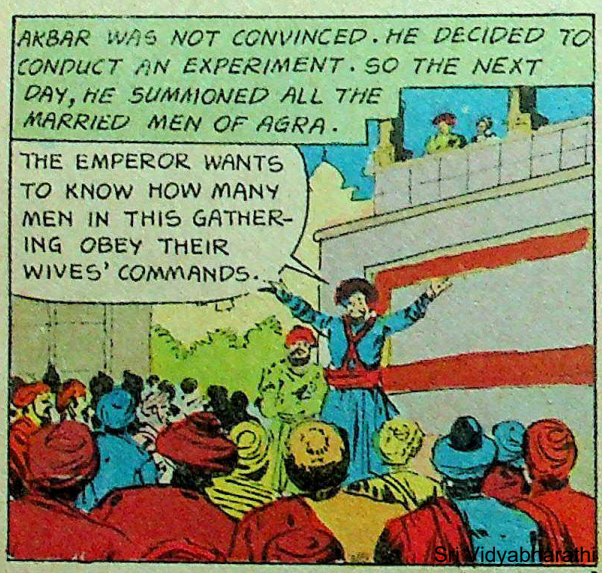
THE OBEDIENT HUSBAND







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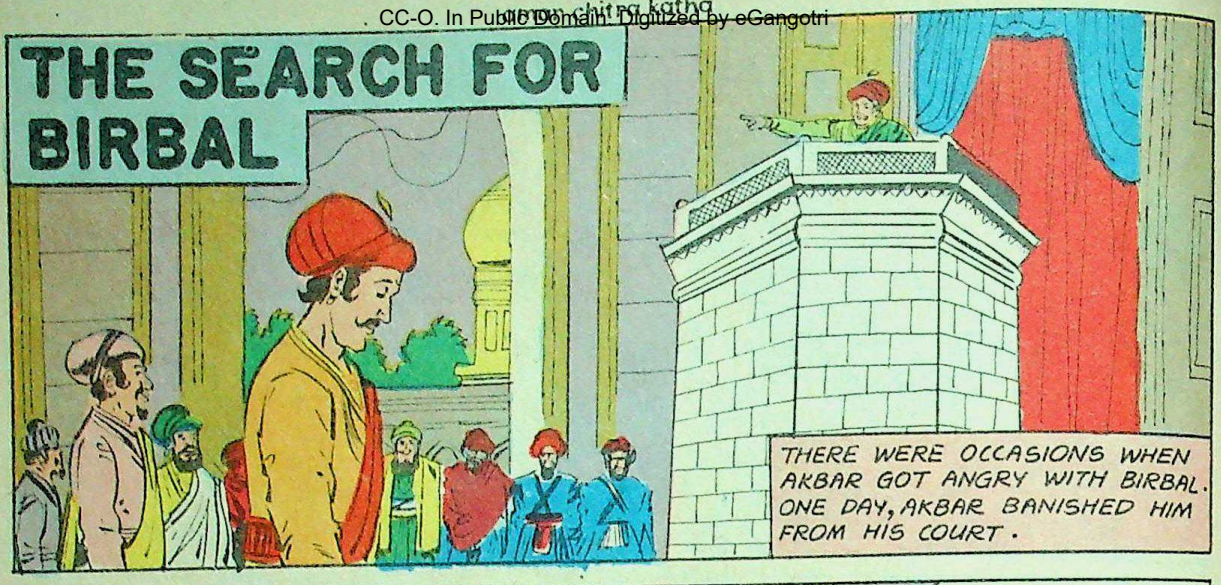
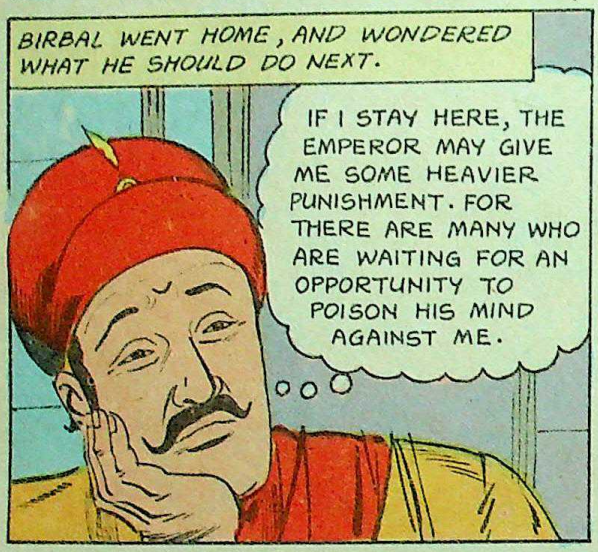
THE SEARCH FOR BIRBAL





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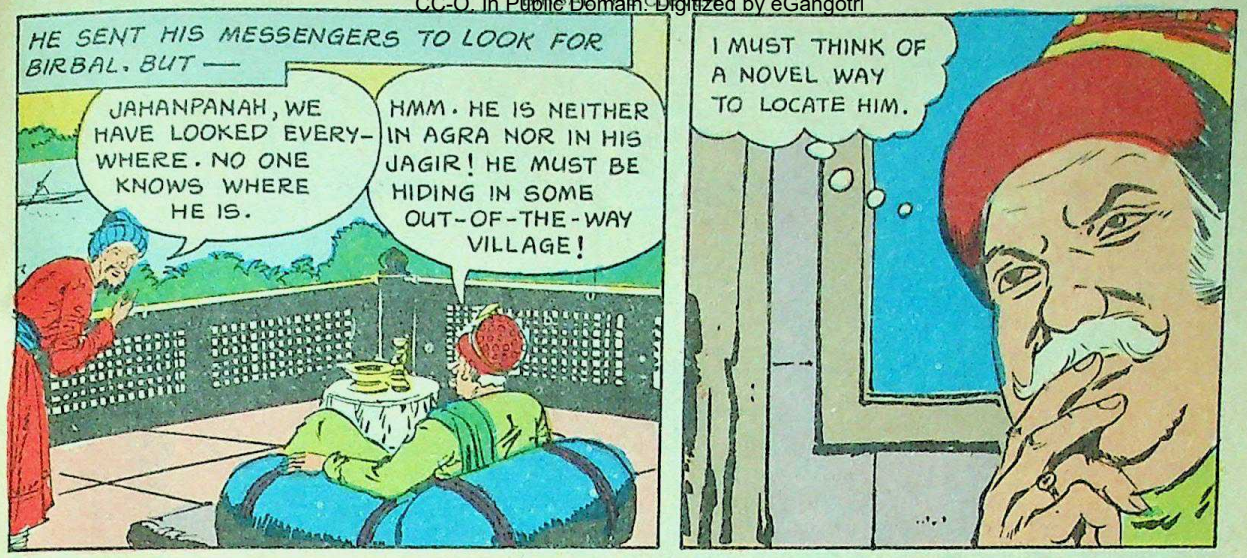

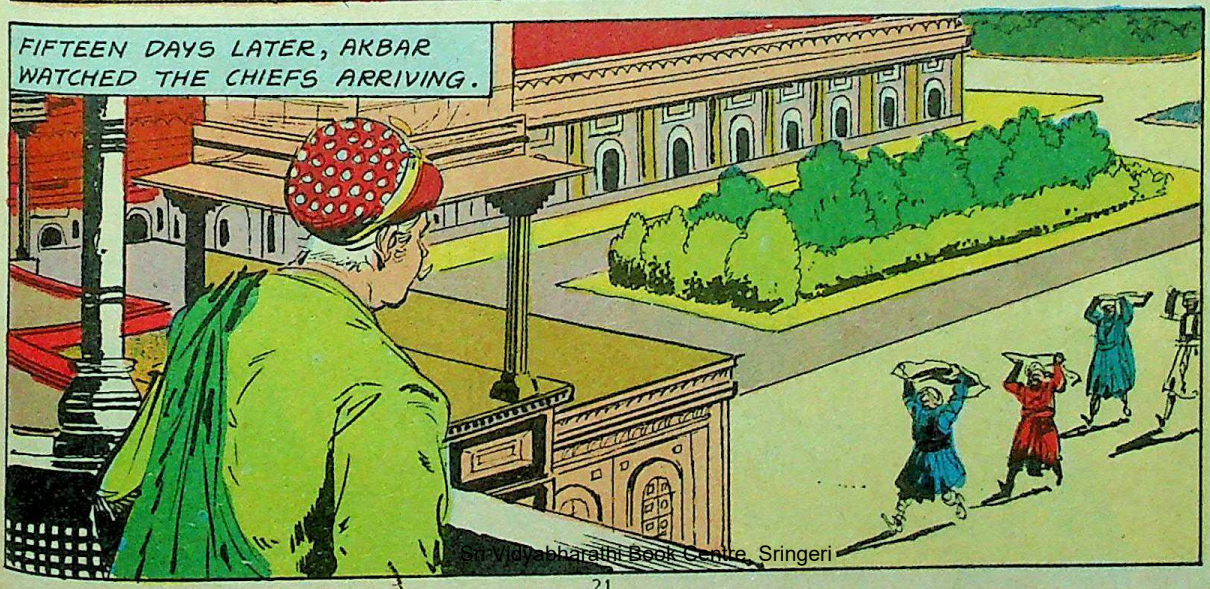

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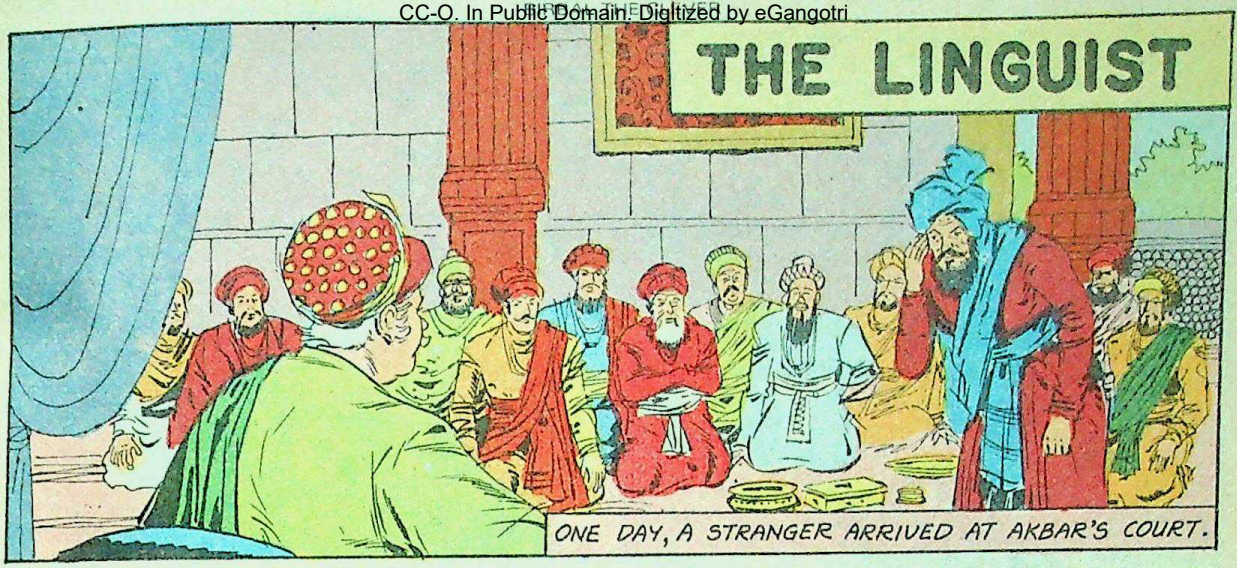
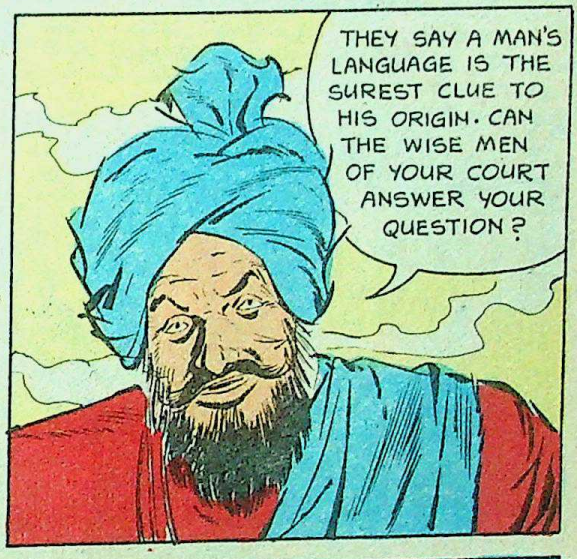
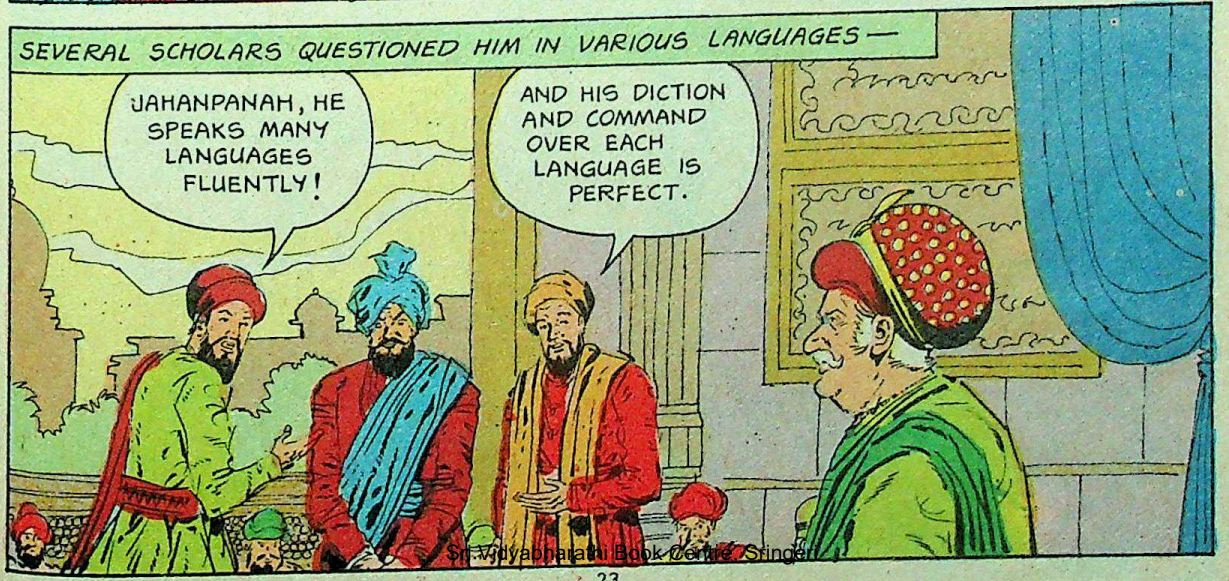
THE LINGUIST







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chitrakatha

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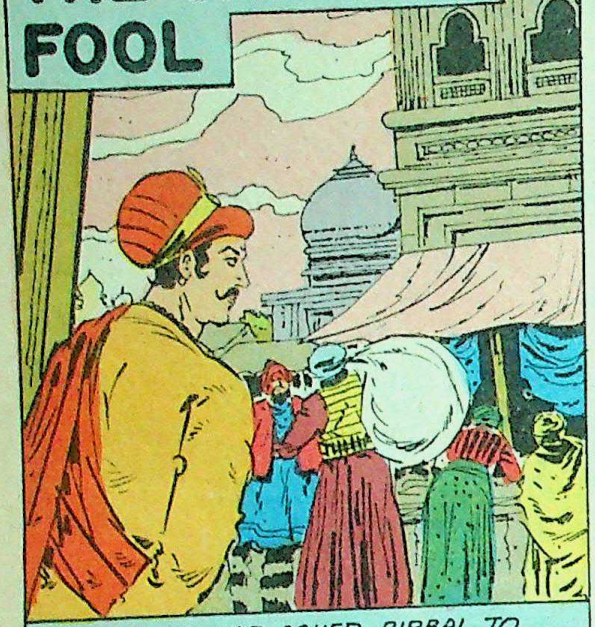
THE GREATER FOOL



ONCE AKBAR HAD ASKED BIRBAL TO MAKE A LIST OF FOOLS. SO BIRBAL WENT THROUGH THE STREETS OF AGRA LOOKING FOR FOOLS.

MEANWHILE, A MERCHANT ARRIVED AT THE COURT AND BOWED LOW BEFORE AKBAR.

YOUR MAJESTY, I SELL HORSES OF THE FINEST BREED. I HAVE BROUGHT ONE AS A SAMPLE. IT WOULD GIVE ME GOOD FORTUNE IF YOU JUST GAVE IT A GLANCE.

HORSES WERE AKBAR'S WEAKNESS. HE HAD THOUSANDS OF THEM IN HIS STABLE, BUT THE PROSPECT OF BUYING SOME MORE FINE STEEDS ALWAYS APPEALED TO HIM. HE INSPECTED THE HORSE PERSONALLY.

THAT IS A FINE SPECIMEN!

YOUR MAJESTY, I HAVE A HUNDRED SUCH HORSES. WOULD YOU LIKE TO BUY ALL OF THEM?

YES! WHEN CAN YOU BRING THEM?

JAHANPANAH, BUT FOR THE HEAVY EXPENSE I WOULD HAVE BROUGHT THEM WITH ME.

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GIVE ME A LAKH OF GOLD COINS AND I WILL COME BACK WITH THEM IN A FORTNIGHT.

ONE LAKH OF GOLD COINS! OH, ALL RIGHT.

THE TREASURER WAS SUMMONED AND, RECEIVING THE MONEY, THE MERCHANT LEFT.

AH! THERE IS BIRBAL! I MUST SHOW HIM THIS FINE HORSE!

LOOK AT THIS FINE HORSE, BIRBAL! I HAVE JUST GIVEN THE MERCHANT A LAKH OF GOLD COINS FOR A HUNDRED SUCH HORSES.

YOU MEAN... YOU GAVE HIM THAT AMOUNT IN ADVANCE?

YES, OF COURSE! THE HORSES ARE CHEAP EVEN AT THAT PRICE. LET'S GO IN, NOW.

BUT, JAHANPANAH, DID THE MAN HAVE SUITABLE REFERENCES? OR DO YOU KNOW HIS ADDRESS? DID SOMEONE AT THE COURT STAND GUARANTEE FOR HIM?

NO...NO! BUT HE LOOKED HONEST ENOUGH. HE WILL COME BACK, BIRBAL. TELL ME NOW, HOW IS THE LIST OF FOOLS COMING ALONG?

IT IS ALMOST READY, JAHANPANAH. I HAVE JUST ONE MORE NAME TO ADD TO IT.

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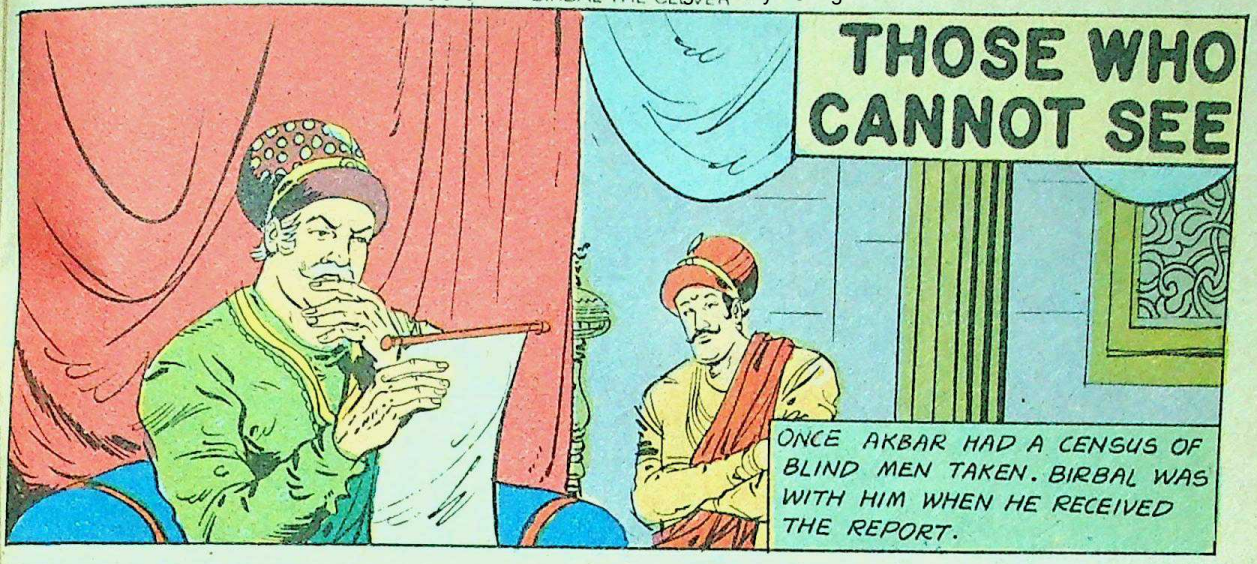
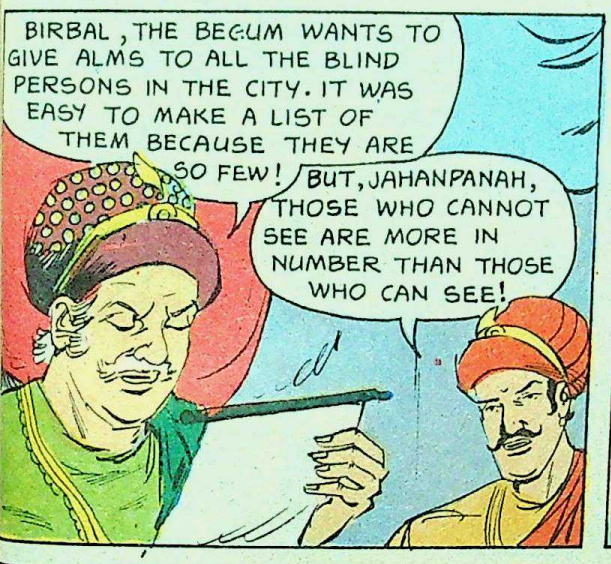
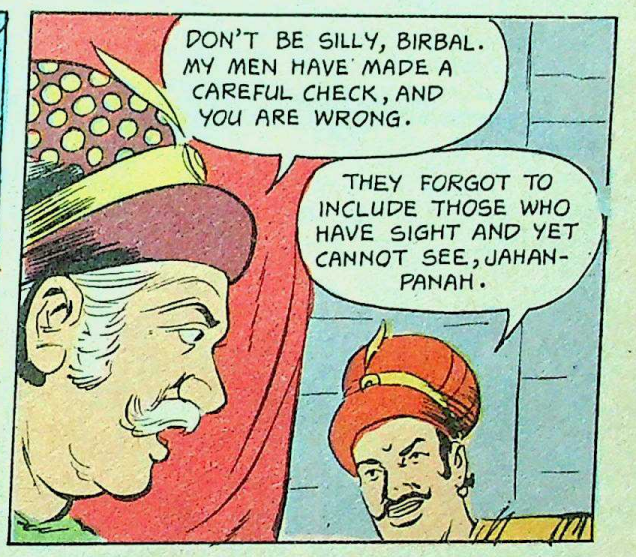
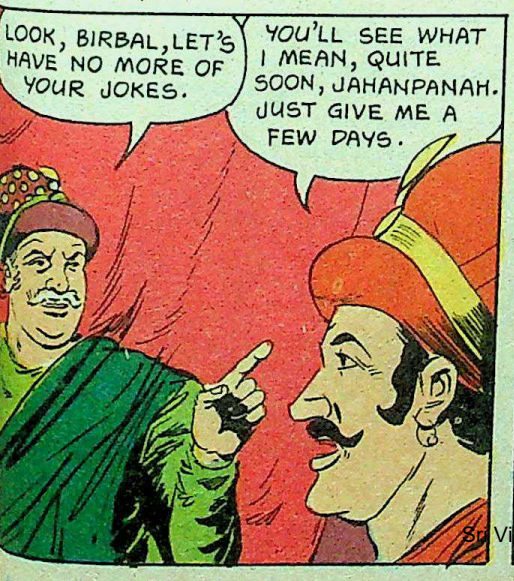
THOSE WHO CANNOT SEE









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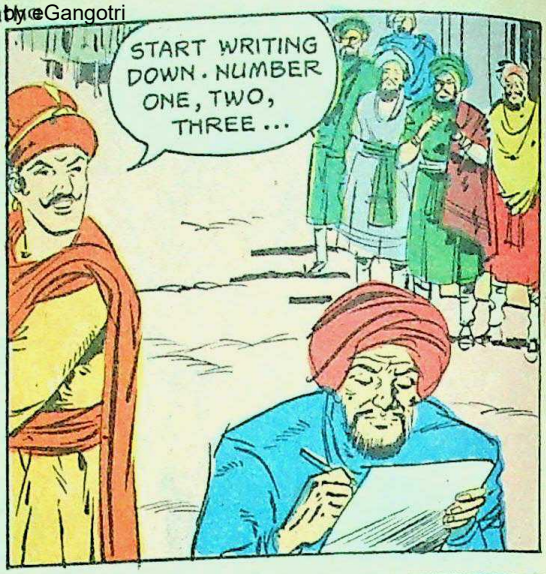

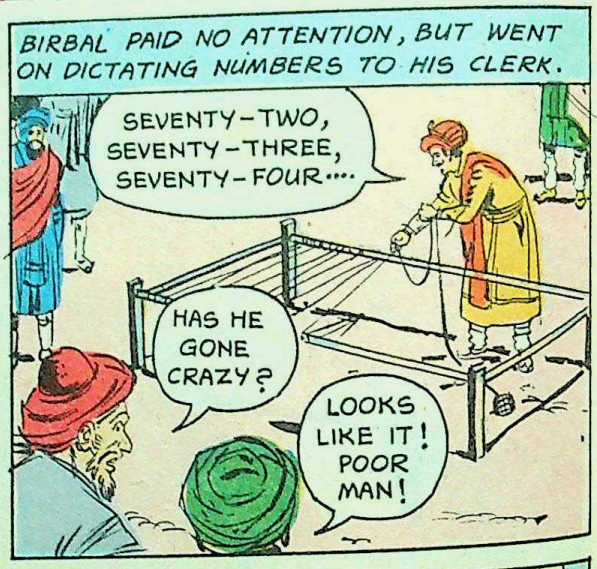

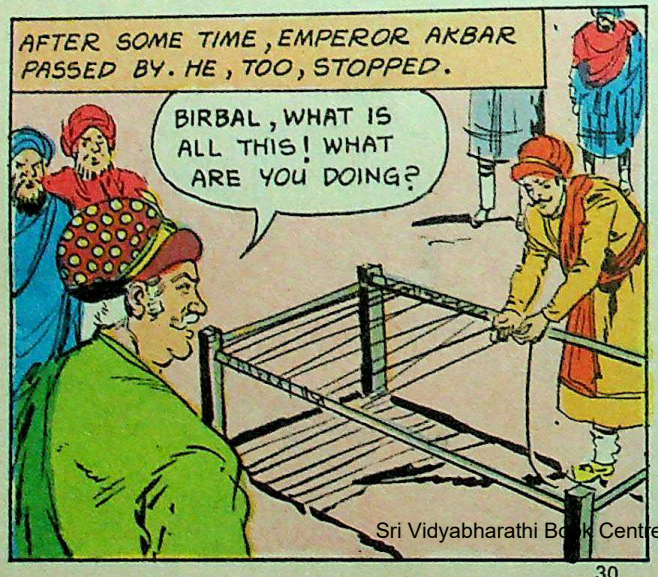

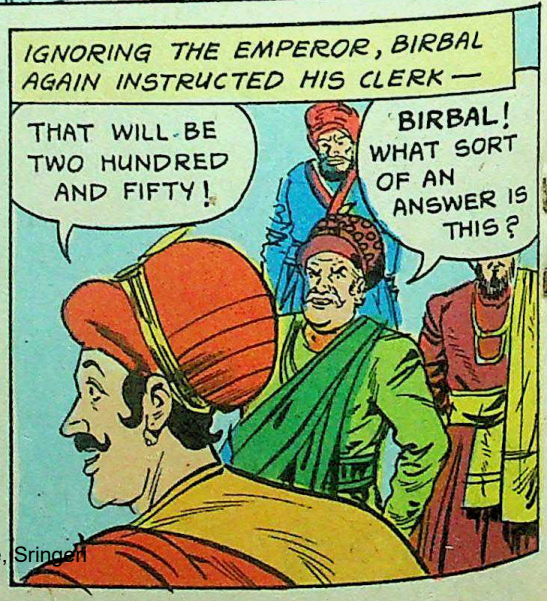

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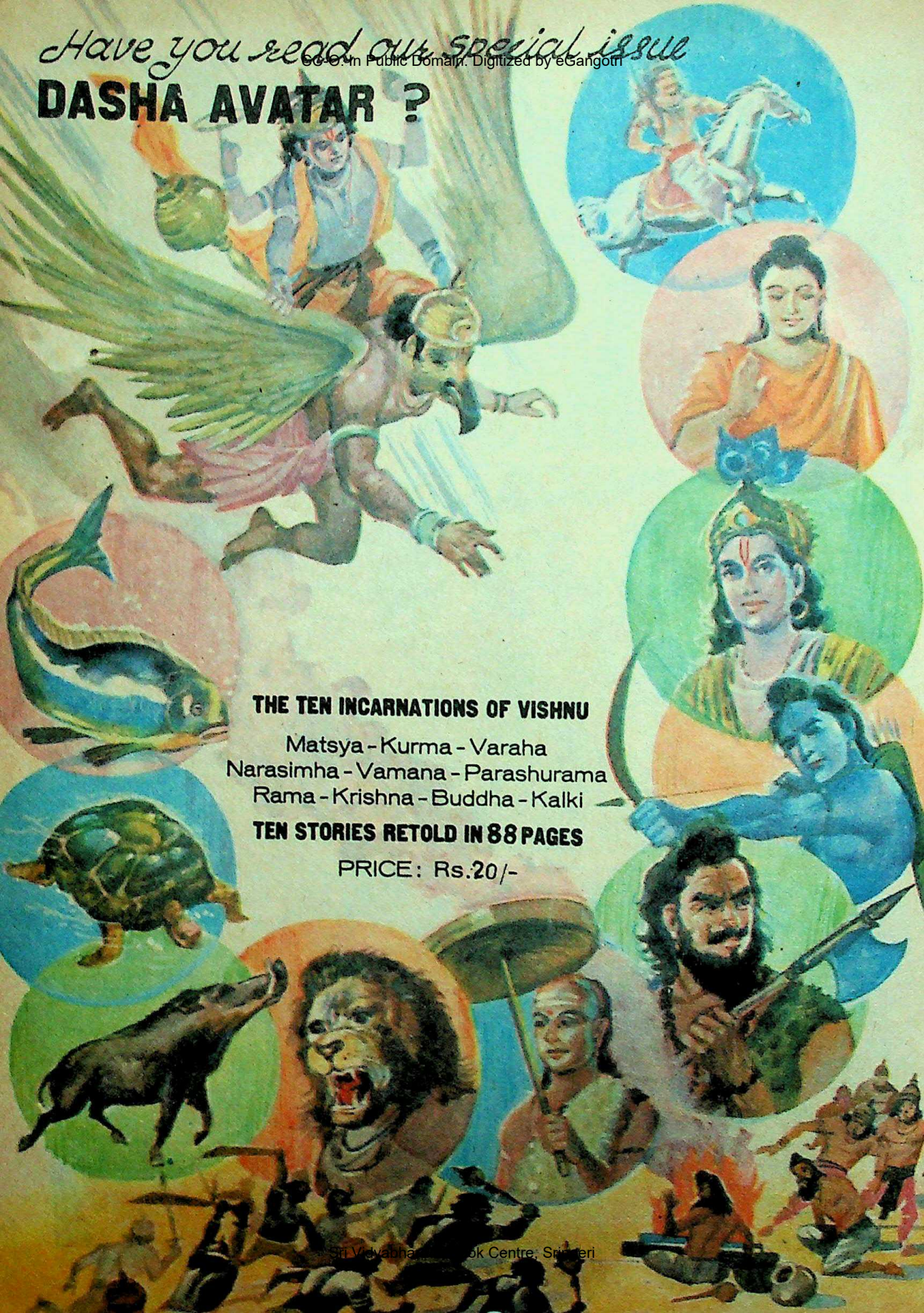

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